CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Tuesday, 21 January 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 751st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and the first part of the 1997 session.

At the outset, I should like to extend on behalf of the Conference, and on my own behalf, a warm welcome to our distinguished visitor today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini, who will be our first speaker. His presence among us today is yet another testimony of the continued interest of his Government in the multilateral approach to arms control and disarmament and the importance it attaches to our Conference. I am sure that his statement will be followed with great interest.

Allow me also to extend a cordial welcome to the new colleagues who have taken up their duties as representatives of their countries to the Conference since the end of the 1996 session - Ambassadors Dembri of Algeria, Campbell of Australia, Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Mernier of Belgium and Corrales Leal of Venezuela - and assure them of our cooperation and support in their new assignments.

I would now like to make an opening statement.

It is a great honour for me to assume, on behalf of the Republic of Korea, the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to stress that no efforts will be spared on my part in carrying out my duties as President.

First of all, I wish to express my deep gratitude to my predecessor, Ambassador Ludwik Dembinski of Poland, for the valuable efforts and contribution he made during his presidency. I am also grateful to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the CD and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General, and all other staff members of the secretariat for their able and indispensable support.

As we begin a new year, it is appropriate to look back and take stock of the developments in the disarmament area for the year which has just been brought to a close. In 1996, there were, indeed, a variety of events to list as meaningful developments in the disarmament domain, both within and outside the CD framework. For example: the fulfilment of conditions for the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with Hungary becoming the 65th country to deposit the instruments of its ratification; the amendment of Protocol II on landmines of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons; the convening of the International Strategy Conference on the global ban on anti-personnel landmines, commonly referred to as the "Ottawa Process"; the signing of the African Nuclear-weapon-free-zone Treaty (the Treaty of Pelindaba); the progress towards establishing a verification regime for the Biological Weapons Convention; and, most importantly, the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

There is no question that the adoption of the CTBT by the United Nations General Assembly in September last year was a landmark achievement for the

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cause of the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. It is a giant step forward in the march towards the goal of creating a world free of nuclear weapons, which is the common aspiration of humankind. However, we should not let ourselves fall into euphoria, because there are still important steps to be taken and hurdles to be overcome before we see the Treaty enter into force and actually be implemented.

These questions I have just mentioned bear on an important issue facing us today, the setting of the CD's agenda for 1997, to which I now turn.

The rules of procedure of the CD provide that the Conference adopts its agenda and establishes its programme of work, on the basis of its agenda, at the beginning of each annual session. Unfortunately, I must report that the Conference has yet to reach a consensus on the agenda and work programme. In the light of the consultations I have conducted with the different groups and delegations, I have prepared a draft provisional agenda for the 1997 session with the hope that such an agenda can be adopted without prejudice to the outcome of the CD's consultations on the organizational arrangements to address the various agenda items.

At the same time, we have drawn an important lesson from the whole process of the negotiations leading up to the final adoption of the Treaty by the United Nations General Assembly, in terms of the future role or functioning of the CD as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. It is no secret that, even though the CD made a crucial contribution to the birth of the CTBT by crafting the Treaty through long and painstaking negotiations, the text of the Treaty could not be formally forwarded by the CD to the United Nations General Assembly, hence leaving to that body the task of bringing the Treaty into being. Thus, the whole CTBT process has brought the CD to a crossroads in terms of redefining its future role and enhancing its credibility vis-à-vis the international community, while at the same time setting a new direction for the CD to move in the years to come.

How should the CD consolidate its relevance and viability as a multilateral negotiating forum? How can we achieve a synergy between the CD process and other parallel processes for disarmament, with a view to reinforcing the role of the CD, while not letting the two processes compete with each other to the detriment of the CD's integrity?

Of course, I am not attempting to pass any premature value judgements on these important issues. I am simply raising, at this critical juncture, those important questions which should be answered collectively by all the CD members on an urgent basis.

The draft provisional agenda, having been prepared taking into consideration the evolution of the work of the CD in recent years, and recommendations contained in the pertinent resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, encompasses such items as: nuclear disarmament; the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices; effective international

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arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; transparency in armaments; prevention of an arms race in outer space; anti-personnel landmines; and regional aspects of conventional disarmament.

I intend to carry on my consultations with the members of the CD in order to reach a consensus on the agenda, without losing sight of the importance of setting up the concrete work mechanisms on the individual agenda items. But most of all, I shall rely on the support and cooperation of all delegations of the CD in performing my duty on this particular issue.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay my tribute to Ambassador Hocine Meghlaoui of Algeria, the former Special Coordinator on the review of the agenda, and Ambassador Ludwik Dembinski of Poland, the past President of the CD, for their valuable and unsparing efforts in this regard.

Consultations have also been conducted on the expansion of membership since the presidency of Ambassador Dembinski, and a consensus has emerged on the appointment of a Special Coordinator with a broad mandate. As of now, 17 States have applied for membership in the CD. I will propose soon to the plenary the adoption of an appropriate decision on this issue.

While renewing my pledge to do my utmost in carrying out my duties as the President of the CD, I appeal once again to all of you to demonstrate a spirit of cooperation and compromise so that the work of the CD proves to be productive in the weeks to come.

Besides the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Malaysia, Myanmar, Finland, Poland, the United States of America and Canada. Once we have heard the speakers inscribed for today, I shall invite the Conference to consider, in an informal plenary meeting, the requests received from States not members of the Conference to participate in our work during this session. These requests have been circulated to you under the document symbol CD/WP.479. Thereafter, we shall resume the plenary meeting in order to formalize the agreement reached in the informal meeting.

I have pleasure in inviting the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Lamberto Dini, to make his statement.

Mr. DINI (Italy): I begin by congratulating you on your appointment to chair this Conference and by recalling the most friendly and fruitful relations Italy enjoys with your own country. I should also like to voice our most sincere appreciation for the skilful stewardship of Ambassador Jaap Ramaker as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, who presided over the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty last September.

(Mr. Dini, Italy)

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ambassador Vladimir Petrovsky and his deputy, Mr. Bensmail, who made an outstanding contribution to the successful outcome of the CTBT negotiations, and now guarantee the smooth running of our Conference.

My presence at this inaugural session is meant to underline the importance that the Italian Government attaches to disarmament, which is a central component of our security policy, and I consider it a distinct privilege to address you today at this inaugural session of the CD.

Membership of this Conference forms part of a much broader context in which Italy views the United Nations and its principal agencies to be the most appropriate forums for dealing comprehensively with the disarmament issue.

This Conference must continue to be the main multilateral disarmament negotiating body, with the primary purpose of concluding agreements to be adopted by the international community as a whole. Its authority will be enhanced as more countries acquire full membership, including those member States of the European Union that have already submitted their applications.

Italy believes that other international forums can effectively support the important role played by the United Nations system. More prominence, we believe, should be assigned to the G7 group of the most highly industrialized countries, with whose political deliberations the Russian Federation is associated, and which in recent years has advanced major proposals, particularly in the areas of disarmament and nuclear safety. Last April's Moscow summit was one of the most significant events in this regard. The launching of a new policy that I would call "disarmament cooperation", namely, the provision of assistance to countries that are called on to make the greatest efforts in the sphere of arms reduction, is certainly one of the areas in which the G7/P8 group can best express its full potential.

But arms control and reduction is also a regional issue, and some of the disarmament and non-proliferation problems can be more effectively resolved within their own geopolitical context. We cannot, for example, tackle the nuclear problem in South Asia or the Middle East without taking account of the deep-seated causes which are preventing certain countries, even today, from adhering to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Over the past 50 years Europe has lived in a state of tension and confrontation, and has done more than any other continent to put into place the most advanced disarmament, security and confidence-building measures.

The recently reinforced Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) provides a security framework within which all the European States participate on an equal footing and which has provided the setting for a number of important agreements: I am thinking in particular of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, on which renegotiations will begin in a few days' time, and of the subregional disarmament undertakings and understandings established last June by the Florence Agreement aiming at a military balance in the former Yugoslavia, an area which should be gradually integrated into the rest of Europe also in terms of security.

(Mr. Dini, Italy)

The European Union's foreign and security policy has, in the past few years, given special attention to disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope that, in the future, the European Union will play a part in its own right at the Conference on Disarmament. Italy is supporting the development of a European defence and security identity within the European security structures - and I am referring to the European Union and the Western European Union - and in the Atlantic Alliance. At the same time we support the development of NATO's new tasks, in peace-keeping and cooperation, and in the overall security risks posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

I felt it appropriate to provide these indications of Italy's stance on disarmament before coming to the specific issues addressed by this Conference. I would like first of all to pay tribute to the outstanding results the Conference has achieved in recent years. The Convention banning chemical weapons was concluded thanks to your commitment, and is now about to come into force. This is mainly a disarmament agreement which must be applied flexibly and consistently, bearing in mind that not every State has yet signed or ratified it.

The latest success of the Conference on Disarmament is the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, concluded last year after intensive negotiations. If nuclear explosions are becoming a thing of the past, we owe this fact to those countries that negotiated the Treaty in Geneva. We must do our utmost to encourage the States which have not yet signed the Treaty to accede to it as soon as possible, in a climate of greater international and regional trust.

Italy is determined to pursue nuclear disarmament globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. We took on specific responsibilities in the negotiations leading to the banning and destruction of intermediate-range nuclear forces, and we are equally committed today. No one can deny that important results have been achieved in recent years. The dramatic reductions already made, particularly in Western Europe, speak for themselves. We thus believe that the path of nuclear disarmament is now clearly defined. We hope to exploit the momentum that was created by the START I and START II Treaties and work for further verifiable arms limitation and reductions which could eventually involve the other nuclear Powers.

We do understand the impatience shown by certain States regarding nuclear disarmament, but we believe that the problem cannot be solved by merely issuing fine-sounding declarations. This is why we urge everyone to be specific and to embark on negotiations for which we feel, along with others, that the time is now ripe. I am referring to a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices - the so-called "cut-off" - and to the resumption of the negotiations in the 1995 Ad Hoc Committee, whose activity is still paralysed. It is inconceivable to permit fissile materials to be manufactured while nuclear tests are being banned and existing fissile material is being destroyed. It would be a historical contradiction. But the "cut-off" is only the first in a series of measures set out in the "Principles and objectives" document agreed at the Review and Extension Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

(NPT). In the view of the Italian Government, this document is itself a plan of action for nuclear disarmament over the next few years. Some of the most promising goals that still lie ahead are the following: consolidating and extending the denuclearized zones, especially in areas of tension; strengthening negative and positive security assurances to benefit States that fully comply with the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty; and extending and enhancing the IAEA safeguards in order to detect and prevent more effectively any possible undeclared nuclear activity.

The need for this Conference to deal also with conventional armaments is not only to strike a proper balance between nuclear and conventional arms issues. It is generally acknowledged that the excessive build-up of conventional weapons is destabilizing and can fuel regional conflicts. The control of conventional weapons therefore demands particular attention. In Europe, the CFE Treaty and the Florence Agreement on the control of weapons in the former Yugoslavia are already a reality, and bear witness to our commitment. We are ready to make available to everyone the experience that we have acquired in this sector. Disarmament is a question of experience and know-how, which we shall all be more than willing to share.

Priority must be given to emergency situations, and the main emergency the international community is required to deal with today is the question of anti-personnal landmines. We must focus on this issue for moral and humanitarian reasons, and also in the interest of economic development. As President Clinton recently said, "Our children deserve to walk the Earth in safety".

The President of the Italian Republic, and other major international authorities, including Pope John Paul II, have launched appeals for an agreement banning these weapons. At home, the Italian Parliament is now debating a bill banning anti-personnel landmines which should be one of the most advanced pieces of legislation ever adopted. In particular, it will contain the commitment I entered into last September in New York to ensure that Italy would ban the export and manufacture of anti-personnel landmines once and for all, and begin reducing them by destroying existing stocks of landmines and introducing further restrictions.

Italy considers that the whole complex issue of anti-personnel landmines, imposing a total ban on their production, destroying existing stockpiles, and verifying their destruction is essentially a disarmament problem. This is why, when I addressed the United Nations General Assembly, I said that these important negotiations should be left to the Conference on Disarmament. I welcome in this respect the very recent announcement by the United States which recognizes the CD as the most appropriate forum for these negotiations. This Conference has the experience, the facilities and the personnel to handle these negotiations. We fully realize the difficulties that lie ahead, owing to the long time it usually takes to agree on a mandate. We nevertheless believe that the issue of anti-personnel landmines is a challenge to us to tackle promptly what has now become an emergency situation. We also know that various political initiatives are being taken, whose aims we wholly endorse, and which are also designed to rapidly define an international

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agreement. But we maintain that for such an agreement to be credible it must attract the largest possible number of countries, and avoid setting up a narrowly based regime that excludes the most important countries.

To deal with the issue of anti-personnel landmines, the European Union has been implementing its most advanced foreign and security policy instrument. I am referring to the Joint Action approved by the EU Council on 1 October 1996. This forms the central benchmark for Italy's policy in this field. As the first immediate step to be taken, we urge every country to ratify and wholly implement, even before its entry into force, the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and in particular Protocol II as amended in May last year (1996). Even though this Convention is not itself sufficient, it will immediately make it possible to reduce the number of victims of such weapons.

As the first and immediate measure to block the flow of anti-personnel landmines, we propose setting up a special international register recording all exports of anti-personnel landmines. But the main purpose is to work towards an international agreement imposing a total ban on the transfer, production, use and storage of anti-personnel landmines. We believe that we should immediately explore the possibility of commencing negotiations here at this Conference, bearing in mind the need to ensure that whatever measures are adopted here are both feasible and effective.

Looking ahead to the debate on the 1997 agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, which this first plenary session is inaugurating, I would like to express the hope that realism will eventually prevail, as should be the case when there is a clear political will to effectively resolve fundamental problems.

I can assure you that my Government will continue to give the closest possible attention to this forum, acknowledging its paramount function of safeguarding international peace and security.

The international disarmament agenda for the coming years is already quite full, and the Conference on Disarmament will have to be its main negotiating forum. It can allow itself no respite and no sabbatical year, because public opinion at home and our national parliaments would never understand, and would never accept it.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

Before giving the floor to the next speakers, I should like to invite the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to inform us on the resources allocated to the Conference for its current session.

Mr. PETROVSKY (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): I should like to inform you that the Secretary-General of the United Nations,

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Mr. Kofi Annan, has decided to take the opportunity of his presence in Geneva on Thursday, 30 January, to address the Conference. On that occasion, he will share with us his vision of the international disarmament agenda and the importance he attaches to our forum. Thus, I will limit my remarks today to providing information on the resources allocated to the Conference this year.

As you know, the secretariat is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to report to the Conference on the services available to it during its annual sessions. During its 1997 session, the Conference will be allocated 10 meetings per week with full services. In other words, we should be able to hold two daily meetings with full services throughout the whole of the session.

As you are all aware, the United Nations continues to face a serious financial crisis and, under the current circumstances, it is essential that the Conference makes the best possible use of the resources allocated to it. The Conference has, in the past, shown great flexibility in using the time allocated to it and I am sure that this will also be the case this year. I should like to remind you that punctuality in starting meetings is very important and that, as usual, meetings with full services cannot be held in the evenings or during weekends.

The situation with regard to documentation in the United Nations continues to be a source of serious concern, and the capacity of the conference services to process documents in a timely manner is being constantly eroded. In this connection, I wish to recall, again, that the measures accepted by the Conference at its informal meeting held on 22 April 1986 concerning savings in documentation continue to be valid. In order to implement these decisions, all documents need to be presented well in advance and duplication of documentation should be avoided. I am sure I can count on your cooperation in exercising every restraint, whenever possible, in the control of documentation.

I would also like to recall that, as part of the secretariat's efforts to reduce expenditure, the following changes were made in the provision of services to the meeting rooms as of 4 March 1996: only documents containing draft proposals which require action will be circulated in the meeting room; while pre-session and reference documents will continue to be supplied to the permanent and observer missions. Therefore, delegations are kindly requested to keep the received copies throughout the annual session and use them during meetings. Nevertheless, a limited number of documents will be available from the documents distribution counter in room C-111.

I would also like to remind delegations to submit as soon as possible their letters of accreditation so that we may issue passes granting access to the Conference rooms, as well as the list of participants. Delegations are kindly requested to carry with them either their CD passes or at least the identification provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

The Conference will continue to have at its disposal the Council Chamber, room I, room C-108, and the secretariat conference room on the sixth floor. When delegations need such facilities for their consultations, I would ask that they coordinate their requests through the secretariat.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Petrovsky for his statement and information. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has sent me a communication transmitting all the resolutions on disarmament and international security matters adopted by the General Assembvly at its fifty-first session. This communication has been distributed by the secretariat as document CD/1440.

I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ambassador Sir Michael Weston.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. My intention in my statement this morning is to set out the United Kingdom's approach to nuclear disarmament. Before doing so, however, I wish to welcome the recent announcement by the United States that they will seek to initiate negotiations here at the CD for a total worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines. The United States' proposal is closely in line with United Kingdom policy and we fully support it. We agree with the United States that this Conference, with its wide membership and established standing, has clear advantages as an international forum for achieving agreement on a worldwide ban. To be effective, an international agreement must include the countries of real concern, the major producers and exporters and those countries which use landmines indiscriminately. I note that this is very much the view just expressed by the distinguished Foreign Minister of Italy, whose statement I warmly welcome. Now I turn to my subject, nuclear disarmament.

The United Kingdom is sometimes accused of not being in favour of nuclear disarmament - or even of being opposed to it. This is simply not true. My purpose this morning, right at the outset of this new CD session, is to explain why and to put forward what I believe to be a practical and realistic approach to nuclear disarmament. From this remark, you will gather that I believe that the alternative approach, put forward so often by others, is neither practical nor realistic, however fine it may sound. Fine words, as they say, butter no parsnips.

The starting-point for the United Kingdom's approach to nuclear disarmament is, of course, article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the NPT. Under that article, to quote it exactly: "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

The United Kingdom is fully committed to this article of the NPT, as to other articles of the Treaty. Clearly the nuclear arms race between East and West has now ceased. But, of course, both nuclear disarmament and general and

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complete disarmament remain to be fully achieved. And there is scope for debate about how best to pursue these objectives. Fortunately the 1995 Conference of NPT States parties has helped to identify the way forward by adopting the "Principles and objectives for non-proliferation and disarmament", in which the section on "Nuclear disarmament" sets out the importance to the international community of three specific objectives: the completion of negotiations for a comprehensive test-ban treaty no later than 1996; the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; and "systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally". The United Kingdom continues to believe that this represents a very sensible agenda for the foreseeable future and I should like to say a few more words about each of these items.

First, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, the CTBT. Well, we have, of course, completed the negotiations for a CTBT. Formally, therefore, this objective set out in the "Principles and objectives" has been achieved. But there is still some way to go before the international monitoring system foreseen by the Treaty is established and before the Treaty enters into force. The United Kingdom believes that we must continue to give high priority to these objectives if the promise of the CTBT is to be fully realized.

The international community has made a good start. One hundred and thirty-eight States have now signed the Treaty, including all five of the nuclear-weapon States. There has been a first meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the Organization that will develop and oversee the international monitoring system. This meeting will be resumed shortly here in Geneva. Pressing on with the tasks that fall to this Commission is a high priority for the United Kingdom.

At the same time, we must continue to hope that those States which have said they will not sign the Treaty will have a change of heart. Just as the CTBT will reinforce the end of the old nuclear arms race between East and West, so it can help to prevent the outbreak of any new nuclear arms race elsewhere. And that must be in everybody's interest - in particular of those that would be most directly affected. So the United Kingdom does not despair of the entry-into-force conditions being met. We sincerely hope they will be met sooner rather than later, and we shall work hard to persuade the countries concerned that their interests lie in signing the CTBT as soon as possible.

The second element in the "Nuclear disarmament" section of the "Principles and objectives" is the fissile material cut-off treaty, the FMCT. This treaty is in effect a complementary measure to the CTBT. Like the CTBT, it will not lead directly to any reductions in nuclear forces. But, also like the CTBT, it will put a limit on the extent to which they can be developed. And it is certainly impossible to envisage the achievement of nuclear disarmament without an FMCT. Let me expand on these two points.

How will the FMCT circumscribe the way in which nuclear forces can be developed? Quite simply by constraining the amount of unsafeguarded fissile material available for potential use in nuclear explosives. I have heard it said that, in practice, the FMCT is unnecessary because the nuclear-weapon

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States have already said they have ceased the production of fissile material for use in nuclear explosives. Well, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom and France have indeed made such statements. But a universal and verifiable FMCT would still have a number of very important effects. It would formalize and verify these statements. It would bring in the other nuclear-weapon State, China. And it would put constraints on the ability of certain non-parties to the NPT to produce more unsafeguarded fissile material. These would be important accomplishments.

But the FMCT would do much more than this. It would also provide an essential foundation for the eventual achievement of nuclear disarmament. Clearly there can be no final achievement of this goal without verification arrangements on all the key facilities which can produce fissile material suitable for use in nuclear explosives. I refer to enrichment and reprocessing facilities. And whatever else an FMCT may or may not do, it will certainly have to involve applying verification arrangements to all such facilities. So, as I have said, the FMCT will put in place an essential prerequisite for the achievement of nuclear disarmament.

I hear it said by some of my colleagues here in the CD that there can be no negotiation of an FMCT without a simultaneous negotiation about a timetable for nuclear disarmament. But the experience of the recent past shows very clearly that linkage between negotiations is not the way to make progress. The INF Treaty, the START I Treaty, the START II Treaty, and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty - none of these was achieved by linking progress on them to progress on other issues. Nor indeed were other important treaties, such as the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. So let us now get on with the negotiation of an FMCT in the CD without getting distracted by questions of linkage.

This brings me to the third item in the "Nuclear disarmament" section of the "Principles and objectives" - "the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goals [sic] of eliminating those weapons, and by all States of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

There are those who feel that, in pursuit of this objective, the international community now needs to agree on a timetable for nuclear disarmament - to map out all the steps for getting from here to there. Some CD members believe this so strongly that they are refusing to allow an ad hoc committee to negotiate an FMCT unless there is also an ad hoc committee to negotiate such a timetable for nuclear disarmament. I have to say quite bluntly that the United Kingdom does not believe this is the best way of making progress towards the goal we all share, either substantively or procedurally.

Substantively, we simply do not see the value at this stage in trying now to devise a complete blueprint for the final achievement of nuclear disarmament. In the United Kingdom's view, the next steps are clear enough - the ratification of START II by Russia, the implementation of START II, the

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negotiation of a bilateral START III between the two States who still possess the vast majority of nuclear weapons in the world. These are large steps in their own right. And taking them will require time. Given the huge uncertainties that looking even further into the future would involve, is it really sensible to expend a lot of effort doing that now? I do not deny that this would be an interesting intellectual exercise. But is it an exercise to which diplomats can usefully contribute at this stage? Frankly, we do not think so.

And this brings me to my procedural point. In our view, the CD should continue to do what it has always done best - namely to negotiate detailed treaties on specific subjects. By adopting this approach, the CD and its predecessors have notched up an impressive list of achievements over the years - the NPT, the BTWC, the CWC, and most recently the CTBT. The CD should not now depart from this winning formula. Instead of wasting its talents on star-gazing, it should turn its energies to the specific job of negotiating an FMCT, a task which its excellent track record suggests it could fulfil admirably. And which, as I have noted earlier, would lay one of the essential foundations for nuclear disarmament.

Let me make one thing clear. The United Kingdom is not opposed to nuclear disarmament. Indeed, as I shall spell out in a moment, we have made our own contribution to the process. But - for the substantive and procedural reasons I have already mentioned - we are opposed to an ad hoc committee in the CD on nuclear disarmament. We believe that, in current circumstances, it is the bilateral START forum which offers the best hope of further progress on negotiated reductions in nuclear forces. Let us not forget what START I has already achieved, what START II offers, and what START III promises. If we are looking for "systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally", we need look no further than the START process for the immediate future.

Please do not think that I am putting forward this argument because the START process does not involve the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom's record in reducing its nuclear forces is second to none. Over the past few years we have been gradually reducing their number and we are continuing to do so. By the end of 1998, the United Kingdom will have only one nuclear system - and a total number of operational nuclear weapons that will be less than 10 per cent of the number of strategic nuclear weapons which the United States and Russia will each be permitted, even when START II is fully implemented. And we have already made it clear that "a world in which American and Russian nuclear forces were no longer counted in thousands but in hundreds would be one where we were ready to join in multilateral negotiations on the global reduction of nuclear arms".

The United Kingdom is therefore already making a full contribution to the process of nuclear reductions and has made clear its readiness to engage in multilateral discussions about further contributions to this process in due course. But we believe that the next steps in this process are best taken through the bilateral START process. We do not believe that a discussion in the CD about a timetable for the final achievement of nuclear disarmament

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would be a productive use of the CD's time - or make best use of the CD's proven talents in negotiating specific treaties on discrete topics. The CD would make a much more useful contribution to the achievement of nuclear disarmament if it focused on negotiating an FMCT - and thus on getting verification arrangements in place on all reprocessing and enrichment facilities.

Before I close, I should like to make one further point about progress towards nuclear disarmament. It is often said that it will be impossible to maintain the non-proliferation regime unless there is still more rapid progress towards nuclear disarmament. Whether that is true or not, the opposite is certainly true. It will be impossible to maintain progress towards nuclear disarmament unless the non-proliferation regime is maintained.

In the United Kingdom's view, it therefore remains a high priority to work for universal adherence to the NPT and to strengthen the associated system of safeguards. We are pleased that the Part 1 measures resulting from the "93+2" programme are now being implemented. But we must press forward with efforts to complete the model of the protocol that will give the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, the legal authority to implement the Part 2 measures - and then ensure that all relevant States actually conclude with IAEA protocols based on that model. This is fundamental if the Agency is to have the powers it needs to prevent any repetition of the Iraqi experience. It is also essential that the international community continues to provide the United Nations Special Commission and IAEA with the resources and support they need to continue their work in Iraq. And, as an early contributor to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, the United Kingdom is keenly aware of the need to keep the Agreed Framework arrangements on track.

We are also keen to take forward the work which was initiated at the Moscow summit on nuclear safety, concerning options for the disposal of surplus fissile material resulting from the dismantling of nuclear weapons. Most of these options are long-term in nature, so it is also essential that interim storage arrangements are safe and secure - and placed as soon as practicable under IAEA safeguards. Further work on the disposal of surplus fissile material resulting from dismantled nuclear weapons is also important. We welcome the various cooperative projects with Russia that are now going forward in this area. Nor should any of us forget the welcome decisions taken by the Governments of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakstan, which mean that there are no longer any nuclear weapons on their territories. All these developments are important pieces in the non-proliferation jigsaw, and hence in the nuclear disarmament jigsaw.

But, of course, the NPT itself remains the cornerstone of the international community's non-proliferation efforts. The United Kingdom looks forward to the beginning in April 1997 of the strengthened review process to which all the parties agreed at the 1995 Conference. We look forward to a wide-ranging and productive discussion.

Although I have spoken mainly about nuclear issues, we should not forget that article VI of the NPT speaks of general and complete disarmament as well

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as of nuclear disarmament. And, just as non-proliferation efforts are essential to the achievement of nuclear disarmament, so are other arms control efforts which contribute to this broader goal of general and complete disarmament.

If we are serious about nuclear disarmament - and, as I have demonstrated, the United Kingdom is - we must also press on with these other efforts, particularly those relating to other weapons of mass destruction. The Chemical Weapons Convention is now set to enter into force in April 1997. But key States - indeed, all States - must adhere to it if it is to make the contribution to national and international security which we firmly believe it can. And, following the recent BWC Review Conference, efforts must continue to complete the Ad Hoc Group's work to strengthen the Convention through drawing up a legally binding verification and compliance regime.

I have one final point to make. In the discussions about nuclear disarmament which have followed the indefinite extension of the NPT, there is, I fear, a good deal of Utopianism. Of course there is nothing wrong with Utopianism. A famous British playwright, Oscar Wilde, once said that "a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at". He was right. We need to have high aspirations.

But we also need realism about the best way of achieving those aspirations. I sometimes feel that in the current debate about nuclear disarmament the more distant aspirational elements are in danger of drowning out the more immediately achievable elements. I therefore make no apology for having focused in my statement on what the United Kingdom believes to be the effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament which can realistically be pursued next.

To sum up, I have tried to give you as clear a picture as I can of the United Kingdom's approach to nuclear disarmament. We are committed to article VI of the NPT. We agree with the agenda for achieving it set out in the "Principles and objectives". That means we want to see the CTBT verification system put in place and the Treaty come into force. It means we want the CD to get on with negotiating an FMCT. It means we want to see systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally - pursued in the immediate future through the START process. It means that we want to see non-proliferation efforts maintained and strengthened, and continuing progress made in other areas of arms control. The United Kingdom looks forward to the active and vigorous pursuit of this wide-ranging agenda.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia, Ambassador Hasmy.

Mr. HASMY (Malaysia): Allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and all distinguished delegates attending this session a Happy New Year and to express the hope that this session, and

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this year, will witness some important breakthroughs which will advance the disarmament process, to which we are all committed, a step further towards the attainment of its goals. In this regard, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express its appreciation for the important and inspiring statement of the honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Lamberto Dini.

This session of the Conference on Disarmament is meeting at a time of particular challenge to the CD following, as it does, soon after the signing of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) through the resumed fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The adoption of the enabling resolution by the General Assembly, following the impasse in the CD, has raised questions about the role and effectiveness of the Conference. While not a member of the CD, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to stress the importance Malaysia attaches to the continued role and relevance of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, and that every effort should be made to preserve, strengthen and promote this role.

It is therefore imperative, at this and future sessions, for the Conference to assure the international community of its continued centrality and relevance in multilateral disarmament negotiations in the context of our times. In overcoming whatever negative impact the CTBT impasse might have on the CD it is important, first of all, for the Conference to address certain aspects of its work methods, decision-making processes and institutional arrangements which have affected its efficacy, and to find for itself a clear road-map and a reliable compass to help steer the multilateral negotiating process forward in the post-cold-war era. It will have to have a clear and, may I stress, updated agenda, a sense of urgency, and a commitment to achieve tangible results. It will have to improve its decision-making methods and strengthen its essential consensus-building approach.

More importantly, the Conference on Disarmament will have to address and reach consensus on the question of negotiating mandates not only in respect of the ad hoc committees already established in 1994, but not reconvened since then, but also new ones in response to the new tasks being assigned to it by the General Assembly. The Conference will have, for instance, to come to grips with the issue of the banning of the production of fissile materials for weapon purposes, on which a mandate to establish an ad hoc "fissban committee" had already been reached in 1995 but, regrettably, it has never been convened. Clearly, in resolving the impasse that has beset the CD on these difficult issues there is a need for renewed commitment and, more importantly, political will on the part of CD members, especially the nuclear-weapon member States, which should exercise the necessary leadership role that they, singly or severally, can and ought to play, to get the CD out of its present situation.

In charting its future course, my delegation feels that it is important that the Conference learn from the lessons of the past, in particular from its recent CTBT negotiations experience, so as to avoid repeating processes and methodologies that would further undermine rather than strengthen the Conference. My delegation is confident that the members of the CD will find

the collective wisdom and creativity in fine-tuning the work methods of the Conference. We also remain hopeful that on the basis of the continued commitments of member States of the Conference to the shared goals of global disarmament it will be able to resolve the many difficult issues on its agenda, including the contentious issue of a fissile "cut-off."

In speaking about the fissile "cut-off" issue, my delegation is of the view that a ban on the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes, which has been a long-standing goal in nuclear disarmament, would indeed be a desirable goal. It would constitute an important step towards deepening further the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. My delegation therefore supports the early conclusion of a "cut-off" treaty as it would complement and reinforce existing unilateral, bilateral and other multilateral nuclear disarmament mechanisms such as the NPT and the CTBT. Clearly, for such a ban to be effective there must be foolproof international control of all fissile materials - hence the importance, in any fissile "cut-off" arrangement, of an effective international control regime. It is imperative, therefore, for the present impasse to be resolved as soon as possible to allow substantive negotiations to begin.

However, in tackling this sensitive issue, in this and future sessions, the Conference would be wise to learn from the lessons of the recent past so as to avoid being bogged down in similar problems faced during the CTBT negotiations. My delegation would therefore appeal to members of this Conference, especially those with particularly strong national positions on the issue, to demonstrate a cooperative and accommodating attitude and forge the required consensus in order to move the process forward. This issue cannot be set aside much longer, if the Conference is to maintain its credibility in the eyes of the international community, but in doing so it should be handled with care, creativity and sufficient flexibility with a view to reconciling seemingly irreconcilable positions of member States.

During the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly Malaysia introduced, on behalf of the co-sponsors, a resolution pertaining to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. The adoption of resolution 51/45 M by a large majority of non-nuclear-weapon States - 115 to be exact - was a testimony to the serious concern, indeed frustration, of the international community over the lack of genuine seriousness and the extremely slow pace in negotiations on nuclear disarmament leading to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. Malaysia was particularly gratified to have had the support of many members of this Conference, including a nuclear-weapon State and a few developed Western member States. The resolution, inter alia, reinforced the unanimous opinion of the world Court which stressed that States parties to the NPT have a legal obligation not only to pursue "negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects", in accordance with article VI of the NPT, but also to "bring to a conclusion" such negotiations. It was an unambiguous message for the nuclear-weapons States to adopt a more serious approach in fulfilling their Treaty commitment to embark on serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament leading to their ultimate elimination.

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While General Assembly resolution 51/45 M did not specifically call on the CD to begin negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention per se, it did call on States to commence negotiations in 1997 leading to the conclusion of such a convention. In recognition of the central role of this Conference in the multilateral disarmament negotiating process, as reflected in its preambular paragraph, the resolution, while keeping the options open in respect of the negotiating forum for the nuclear weapons convention, clearly expects this Conference, by virtue of its position, to commence a negotiating process on nuclear disarmament, which would ultimately lead to the conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention. In this regard, it is important for the nuclear-weapon States to adopt a more positive orientation towards both the United Nations General Assembly resolution and the world Court opinion itself, if they are really committed to the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons.

My delegation would therefore strongly urge the CD to establish immediately an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, as called for in the last and previous sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, which will consider the various aspects of nuclear disarmament already on its agenda, as well as to address those other General Assembly resolutions pertaining to nuclear disarmament, including resolution 51/45 M. Mindful of rule 27 of its rules of procedure, this Conference can ill afford to ignore those resolutions indefinitely, if it wishes to ensure continued international confidence in it and to continue to occupy centre stage and pre-eminence in the multilateral disarmament negotiating process.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to raise the question of the further enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament, an issue that was addressed in United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/47 A, which was overwhelmingly adopted at the last United Nations General Assembly. Inasmuch as we welcome the expansion of the Conference up to its current strength of 60 member States, my delegation is of the view that a number of States, including Malaysia, that have shown an active interest in global disarmament matters and the work of this Conference in particular, have, regrettably, not been accommodated. My delegation continues to hold the view that, subject to the need to ensure the manageability and effectiveness of the CD, all genuinely interested States should be allowed to participate on an equal footing as disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, is an issue of vital importance to States, big or small, developed or developing. We believe that the inclusion of those actively interested States, such as Malaysia, which applied for membership in September 1993, would allow for even greater representation of views on issues of critical importance to humanity, thereby contributing substantively to the work of the Conference. We would, therefore, urge the Conference to address the question of enlargement as a matter of priority so as to facilitate the full and early participation of the remaining applicant States which have been patiently waiting for a positive outcome for several years.

In conclusion, let me assure you of the continuing strong support of Malaysia for the important and indispensable work of the Conference. We are of the view that given the positive global political climate following the end

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of the cold war, the work of the Conference has assumed even increased significance in that opportunities that did not exist during the period of heightened East-West tension are now present, both in respect of conventional and, more importantly, nuclear disarmament. The Conference should take full advantage of the changed global situation and press ahead in fulfilling the role that the international community expects it to play so as to ensure that the world would be a much safer habitat for humanity. It would indeed be a pity if the Conference allows itself to be mired in procedural wranglings and tactical manoeuvres and in the process loose the opportunity to achieve the breakthroughs that are well within its grasp.

My delegation wishes you, Mr. President, and distinguished delegates attending this session of the Conference every success in your deliberations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Malaysia for his statement, and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar, Ambassador Aye.

Mr. AYE (Myanmar): Mr. President, may I first extend to you the warm congratulations of my delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of its 1997 session. It has been our experience that the early stage of the Conference's annual session is always a challenging task for all of us. I am confident that your diplomatic skills and qualities of personal leadership will lead us to a smooth start of our collective endeavours in the CD. I assure you of the fullest cooperation of my delegation in helping discharge your duties. I should like to take this occasion to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Ludwik Dembinski of Poland, for the excellent manner in which he conducted our work.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome in our midst His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, and to listen with interest to his statement, which no doubt constitutes an important contribution to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

I also take this occasion to extend a cordial welcome to our new colleagues who have taken up their duties as representatives of their countries to the Conference on Disarmament, and look forward to benefiting from their experience and wisdom: Ambassador Mernier of Belgium, Ambassador Campbell of Australia, Ambassador Dembri of Algeria, Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh, and Ambassador Corrales Leal of Venezuela.

As I take the floor for the first time in the Conference on Disarmament following the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the United Nations General Assembly last September, I would like to share a few thoughts on the subject. My delegation takes the opportunity to welcome the adoption of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty in New York. Although the Conference on Disarmament found itself unable to endorse it, the treaty was nevertheless a significant achievement by the Conference, for which we owe a special debt of gratitude to the diplomatic skills of Chairman Ambassador Ramaker and his delegation.

(Mr. Aye, Myanmar)

It has often been mentioned that the treaty is not perfect, but it is the best that the CD can produce, given the prevailing circumstances. An end to nuclear-test expositions by all States in all environments for all time is an essential step in preventing the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear weapons and their further proliferation.

This, taken together with other follow-up measures, will constitute positive steps toward nuclear disarmament, and the intended objective of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. Hence the necessity for the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty to attract universal acceptance and adherence.

The present-day international political climate has continued to afford us a welcome opportunity to pursue further efforts toward arms limitation and disarmament. There exists a necessity to explore new approaches in addressing disarmament issues, and to move away from outmoded strategic concepts and doctrines of a bygone era. It is in this context that my delegation perceives a rapidly expending international consensus directed toward the nuclear-weapon States in efforts to encourage them to review and revise their nuclear policies and doctrines.

A case in point is the advisory opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice less than a year ago. An advisory opinion to the effect that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular, the principles and rules of humanitarian law. Additionally, the legal opinion was offered that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted, at its fifty-first session, resolution 51/45 O on nuclear disarmament with an overwhelming majority of 110 votes in favour. The main thrust of the resolution is that it calls upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to commence negotiations early this year on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, and for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework through a nuclear weapons convention.

In this context, we welcome and fully support the proposal of 28 delegations that are members of the CD for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, contained in document CD/1419 of 7 August 1996. My delegation is one of the co-sponsors of this important document. The proposed programme of action outlines a phased programme of nuclear disarmament measures, leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We believe that this concrete proposal can be taken as a basis for, and will contribute to, nuclear disarmament negotiations in the CD.

My delegation's position needs no further elaboration on this question. We are in favour of establishing a separate full-fledged ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the CD, on a priority basis, at the beginning of this session, to commence substantive negotiations on the subject.

(Mr. Aye, Myanmar)

My delegation also holds the view that there exists an urgent need to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Prohibition of the Production of Fissile Materials for Nuclear Weapons and Other Nuclear Explosive Devices, and commence negotiations on this important subject. The terms of reference and a good starting-point for the work of this Ad Hoc Committee have been already formulated in the report submitted to the CD by Ambassador Shannon in document CD/1299 of 24 March 1995.

The issue of negative security assurances is a matter of paramount importance for non-nuclear-weapon States. No doubt the most effective security assurance against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is the total elimination of these weapons. However, pending the attainment of this goal, it is imperative that we have in place effective international arrangements to prevent the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

We feel that we should pursue two parallel approaches in this regard. The first approach is to pursue the discussion and negotiations here in the CD. The second approach is to continue our efforts in the NPT context. The decision on the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" taken in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference contains a programme of action. This programme contains, inter alia, a call for efforts to take further steps that could take the form of an internationally binding instrument to protect non-nuclear-weapon States party to the treaty from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Having said this, I should like to submit some thoughts of my delegation with regard to the programme of work for the CD in 1997. There can be two options, in the form of a concentrated programme, or an extended programme. Under the concentrated programme, we could establish two ad hoc committees, one on nuclear disarmament and the other on a fissile materials ban. The President of the Conference will no doubt carry on further consultations on the remaining items.

The alternative, to which I refer as the extended programme, is to establish ad hoc committees on nuclear disarmament, a fissile material ban, prevention of an arms race in outer space, transparency in armaments and negative security assurances.

If we are to consider the concentrated programme just mentioned, and in the event that the CD finds itself unable to establish separate ad hoc committees on nuclear disarmament and on fissile materials, we may possibly reach consensus to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament with two working groups, i.e. one working group on nuclear disarmament and another working group on fissile materials. This can be an alternative compromise formula, which merits serious consideration by the member States of the CD. And given the experience we have had in the recent past, the CD can handle effectively one ad hoc committee at a time and perhaps two at most.

Several delegations hold the view that we have a balanced agenda including the question of conventional weapons. In this regard I would like

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to express our delegation's deep appreciation to the Secretary-General of the CD and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, for his valuable contribution to our ongoing discussions on the agenda for the current session of the Conference.

While considering the agenda for this year, we believe that identifying the right issues for the CD is of primary importance. Transparency in armaments is partly related to conventional arms and partly to other weapons of mass destruction. Accordingly, my delegation feels that TIA should not confine itself to the issue of conventional weapons. We should find suitable means to accommodate the concerns of parties who attach high importance to the issue of weapons of mass destruction.

With regard to anti-personnel landmines, there have been mechanisms and instruments already worked out by the international community outside the context of the CD. There is also a question of how we envisage the outcome of our work. Are we envisaging a totally new treaty on the subject or an amendment to the existing one? These are questions to be addressed before we proceed further on the subject.

I conclude by emphasizing that it remains our firm conviction that nuclear disarmament should be the central issue in laying down the agenda for this year. We must necessarily resolve this issue in a satisfactory manner in order to pave the way for the smooth commencement of substantive work in the CD this year and indeed in later years. Let us, therefore, face up to this reality, and spare no efforts to find ways and means to move forward in this area.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Myanmar for his statement, and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Director-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference and I wish you success in this demanding task. Let me also, on behalf of the Finnish delegation, welcome the most interesting contribution made here this morning by His Excellency Mr. Dini, Foreign Minister of Italy.

The conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty negotiations last year was a historic achievement. It is important that the Treaty enters into force as soon as possible. Finland calls for those countries which have not yet signed the CTBT to do so.

Once again, the Conference has proved its ability to respond to today's arms control needs, and to produce important results. The CD continues to play an important role as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

But the CD cannot afford to rest on its reputation. The international community expects the Conference to move forward and to produce further results.

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

The Conference on Disarmament is facing new tasks and challenges, in both nuclear and conventional disarmament. We should as clearly as possible identify areas where the Conference has chances to move ahead. Each issue should be addressed on its own merits.

As the CTBT negotiations have been concluded, it is evident that the agenda of the Conference needs renewal. The new agenda should reflect the realities of today's world. It should be balanced and it should reflect the various interests affecting our work. A thorough discussion of the agenda may be necessary.

However, a discussion of the agenda as such has only little relevance outside this chamber. The CD needs to get back into the business of negotiating disarmament treaties and agreements. Pending the outcome of the agenda discussion, the Conference should set up the programme of work for this year's session and establish the necessary ad hoc committees without delay.

In 1995, an agreement was reached on the establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is time for the Ad Hoc Committee to start its work. Differences relating to the scope and other aspects of the "cut-off" treaty should be addressed during the negotiations.

The humanitarian catastrophe caused by the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines calls for urgent international action. During the past year, the international support for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines has grown. Finland supports a global, legally binding and verifiable ban on anti-personnel landmines.

The question of transferring the anti-personnel landmines discussion into concrete and serious negotiations became visible during last fall. The Ottawa process contributed to the political momentum. In the United Nations General Assembly, the usefulness and competence of the CD for real negotiations was for the first time truly discussed.

In order to obtain an effective ban, all the relevant countries should, from the outset, participate in the negotiations. As my Minister announced at the United Nations General Assembly last September, Finland regards the Conference on Disarmament as the most suitable forum for the negotiations on APLs. With its members and observers, the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body of more than 90 countries today. To reach concrete and notable results soon, a step-by-step approach could be considered as a way forward.

Now we are facing a procedural challenge. How to respond to this global call? The Conference on Disarmament should establish an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines and start serious negotiations. Therefore, as an immediate operational task we would kindly invite you, Mr. President, to seek an urgent agreement on the appointment of a special coordinator to consult on the ways in which the issue of anti-personnel landmines could be best moved forward.

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

Let me, at this moment, very briefly welcome the announcement just coming from Washington concerning this particular item. We consider these signals very timely and useful to our immediate work.

Finland and 22 other countries became last year new members of the Conference. Finland supports a further expansion of the membership of the CD. In the meantime, we urge the candidates to participate actively in the work of the Conference.

Finland attaches great value to the work of the Conference. Consequently, Finland has appointed a Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament. I have the privilege and honour to be Finland's first resident CD Ambassador as of 1 March. I look forward to good and productive cooperation with all member and observer delegations as well as with the Secretary-General of the Conference and his staff.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Reimaa for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Poland, Ambassador Dembinski.

Mr. DEMBINSKI (Poland): First, Mr. President, I should like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you, a distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea, on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am confident that as a new member who has recently joined this body, you will bring new vigour and fresh insights to its endeavours. In wishing you every success in the discharge of your mandate - which, as is customary at the initial stage of each annual session of the CD, is both difficult and urgent - I want to assure you of full cooperation of my delegation and of my personal support.

I have asked for the floor as the outgoing President to report briefly on the results of my consultations which I pursued during the inter-sessional period. As will be recalled, at the end of its 1996 session, I was mandated by the Conference on Disarmament, first to continue consultations on the review of the agenda during the inter-sessional period and to report to it at the beginning of its 1997 session, and second to continue consultations on a further expansion of membership of the Conference and to report to it at the beginning of the 1997 session.

Let me first take up the question of the agenda of the Conference. In approaching that task I was fully conscious of its importance and urgency in order for the CD to be able to inaugurate its 1997 session on a constructive note - to adopt an agreed agenda and take indispensable decisions on the organization of its work for the year. At the same time, I was aware of the problems encountered throughout 1996 and, more specifically, of the contents of the report of 3 September 1996 presented to the Conference by the Special Coordinator, Ambassador Meghlaoui of Algeria, on his extensive consultations regarding the review of the agenda.

(Mr. Dembinski, Poland)

My consultations in the available time and with the available delegations, the relevant debate in the First Committee of the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly and, finally, the review of the respective group positions within the framework of the Presidential consultations have led me to reach conclusions which regrettably are not optimistic. No important departures in the known positions of delegations have taken place since Ambassador Meghlaoui's report last September. Since these positions are still far apart, consensus needs to be pursued through further intensive consultations. My conclusion was informally brought to the attention of the incoming President.

At the same time, certain new, informal approaches to restructuring the CD's agenda have attracted the attention of some delegations as possibly more responsive to the new international realities and new challenges. Accordingly, I have kept the incoming President advised of this potential opening in the hope that he might wish to explore its implications further.

My consultations in regard to the question of a further expansion of CD membership have led me to conclude that further efforts need to be pursued in order to bridge the diverging positions of delegations. They range from a prevailing view that all applicant States should be accommodated, to concern for the determination of the maximum desirable size of the CD, to ensuring a regionally balanced representation and to admitting States with the longest applicant status and documented contribution to the CD work as observers. There appears to be an emerging consensus that it might be desirable for the President of the CD to appoint a special coordinator to pursue consultations in that regard.

In concluding my report I would be remiss without voicing my appreciation to the distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, his deputy, Mr. Bensmail, and all the secretariat staff for their support and competent assistance rendered to me throughout the inter-sessional period.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Dembinski of Poland for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. I am sure I speak on behalf of all of us when I express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Dembinski for his untiring efforts in his attempts to build a consensus on the agenda of the Conference and on a further expansion of membership of the Conference. I thank him once again.

I should like to give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Ledogar.

Mr. LEDOGAR (United States of America): Until such time as your desire to curtail or dispense with the CD's ritual greetings and congratulations is more widely accepted, it would be misunderstood if I, too, did not congratulate you on your accession to the CD presidency and to tell you that, as you undertake your delicate tasks of guiding us in the start of our 1997 session, I assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation.

(Mr. Ledogar, United States)

As we begin the 1997 session of the Conference on Disarmament, it gives me great pleasure to read out a statement to this body from President Clinton. I quote:

> "In my message to the Conference on Disarmament three years ago, I urged the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear test ban at the earliest possible time. Your success in that negotiation, and the subsequent adoption of the Treaty by the United Nations General Assembly, will help create a safer world. The successful conclusion of the negotiation is evidence of the Conference's potential to respond to the challenges it now faces.
>
> "Now the Conference on Disarmament should take the next steps on the road to a more secure world.
>
> "Prompt conclusion of a ban on producing fissile material for use in nuclear explosives. Effectively cutting off the spigot for more nuclear weapons is a necessary step toward, and would greatly contribute to, the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament.
>
> "Negotiation as soon as possible of a comprehensive, global ban on anti-personnel landmines. These weapons of war have caused terrible suffering to innocent civilians and represent an enormous obstacle to restoring a more hopeful life after a conflict has ended. All the children of the world deserve to walk the Earth in safety.
>
> "I call on the Conference to press forward with a renewed sense of purpose, to demonstrate to the world its capability to take these key steps to advance the process of nuclear and conventional disarmament."

As I and many of my colleagues have stated, the CD's first priority in the field of nuclear disarmament should be to negotiate a treaty to ban the production of fissile material that could be used for nuclear weapons purposes. Such a negotiation would fulfil not only the requirement set forth in the "Principles and objectives" document approved by consensus at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, it would also represent a major step forward in the ongoing process of reducing the number of nuclear weapons as well as in preventing their proliferation in the world. Clearly it would be another major step in the continuum of actions that has been under way for some time now to make progress toward the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. For these reasons, I hope we all will be able to re-establish, as was approved by this body almost two years ago, an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty on banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

As you heard in his statement to the CD which I just read out, President Clinton has also proposed that, in the field of conventional disarmament, this body begin the negotiation of a comprehensive, global ban on anti-personnel mines. In this regard, I would like to read out another statement - this one by the Press Secretary of the White House, issued in Washington last Friday, 17 January 1997.

(Mr. Ledogar, United States)

"President Clinton today announced that when the Conference on Disarmament opens its 1997 session in Geneva on Monday, the United States will seek to initiate negotiations on a worldwide treaty banning the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. As the President said before the United Nations General Assembly in September, 'Our children deserve to walk the Earth in safety'. The United States hopes that the nations of the world will work with us to create that safety and ban the scourge of landmines, which every year kill or wound more than 25,000 civilians.

"To give further impetus to this effort, the President has decided that the United States will observe a permanent ban on the export and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. This action builds on the Landmine Export Moratorium Act sponsored by Senator Patrick Leahy, an Act which has temporarily prohibited the export and transfer of these weapons since 1992. We urge all other nations to join us in stopping the export and transfer of these mines, which will both hasten the completion of a comprehensive ban and save many innocent lives. As a step toward a ban, the President has decided to cap our anti-personnel landmine stockpile at the current level of inventory.

"President Clinton last May announced the United States's intention to achieve as soon as possible a worldwide ban on landmines. In December, in the United Nations General Assembly, nations voted 155-0 in favour of the United States-initiated resolution urging States to pursue such an agreement.

"After extensive consultations with many countries, the President believes that the Conference on Disarmament offers the most practical and effective forum for achieving our aim of a ban that is global. Both the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention were successfully negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament.

"The United States looks forward to the opening of the Conference on Disarmament ... as an opportunity to begin discussion of these initiatives and to make early progress on starting negotiations. At the same time, the United States welcomes efforts outside that forum, including the free-standing process initiated by Canada, that can help provide momentum to our common goal."

The two statements I have just read indicate that this body has essential work to be done, work that my country hopes the CD will be able to take up forthwith. In essence, we are challenged with the opportunity to negotiate global disarmament agreements in both the nuclear and conventional fields in two specific areas, in addition to the more traditional agenda items on which the CD has been working in the past. I, and my delegation, hope that we all can set aside the politics of delay that have hamstrung the CD in its non-CTBT work for the past two years and that we can move forward on our agenda, especially in the two areas mentioned in President Clinton's statement to this body.

(Mr. Ledogar, United States)

I look forward to working closely with you as we try to achieve these crucial objectives.

I will ask that you circulate as official CD documents President Clinton's statement as well as the White House Press Secretary's statement and a fact-sheet on United States initiatives on anti-personnel landmines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ambassador Moher.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): Mr. President, referring to the statement by the preceding speaker, I would like to associate myself with his opening comment and, in the absence of one dramatic reform, begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency. We, as others, look forward to working with you on the many challenges ahead and are confident that you will be able to steer us through any shoals we encounter along the way. I would also like to join others in welcoming our new colleagues from Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium and Venezuela and we were certainly also honoured to listen carefully to the words from the distinguished Foreign Minister of Italy earlier this morning.

As the Conference on Disarmament begins its work in 1997, Canada remains committed to contributing to fruitful discussions and substantive negotiations on a broad range of disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation issues. With the CD's consideration of the CTBT now concluded, we are able to turn our attention to other, pressing, matters. Like many, we believe that we must update and consolidate the CD's existing, anachronistic agenda. We need a relevant, focused, practical agenda to guide our discussions and negotiations into the next century.

We have put on record our ideas as to what such a reformed agenda might be. Those views were made known to the CD in September 1996, in the statement by the Western Group and the subsequent statement by Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In our view, the agenda should incorporate action on both nuclear (and other weapons of mass destruction) and conventional weapons issues, without neglecting other issues. In that context, we welcome your efforts, Mr. President, to put forward a non-prioritized provisional list of items which, subject to further consultations on organizational and related arrangements, could constitute a draft provisional agenda for our work. As you know, we are prepared to begin further consultations on that basis.

Canada believes that nuclear disarmament is a central issue that the CD must address. But we must do so in a constructive way. The debate to date has sadly been characterized by categorical rejections on the one hand and theological demands on the other. This approach will not produce results. It will not advance the nuclear disarmament agenda.

(Mr. Moher, Canada)

For this reason, we have suggested the creation of a mechanism for the substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament issues, with a view to identifying if and when one or more specific issues should be the subject of negotiation.

We also believe that conventional disarmament is a pressing and central issue which deserves the attention of the CD. For example, based on the earlier P-5 guidelines for conventional arms transfers, the CD could consider measures to enhance transparency and substantive dialogue and identify further steps for international action. This would be a logical continuation of our earlier work on transparency in armaments and build upon the evolving United Nations arms register process.

Other issues should also be addressed. Issues which will help us contribute to a secure and peaceful twenty-first century. For example, the CD should consider the negotiation of a legally binding instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space.

For sake of brevity, an outline paper which elaborates further on these ideas will be attached to this statement, which we are circulating.

In the context of our views on the CD's agenda, we again note the agreement among CD members, based on the Shannon paper and mandate therein, to negotiate a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The CD should begin these negotiations immediately. There is no doubt that the passage of time since 1995, other developments and the complexity of the issue itself all mean that the CD will need to do considerable definitional, organizational and operational work so that the Ad Hoc Group established to negotiate on the basis of the Shannon mandate will be able to implement successfully our earlier decision. Canada sees no reason why we should not begin that work immediately.

Certainly, as a country firmly committed to fulfilling our NPT responsibilities, we believe we have an obligation to begin work - now - on such a "cut-off" convention. The global community, through the United Nations, and during the NPT Review and Extension Conference, has urged the CD to get on with concluding such a convention.

I would like to speak for a moment on the issue of anti-personnel mines. The urgent conclusion of a comprehensive treaty banning the use, as well as the production, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines is a top Canadian foreign policy priority.

Delegations will find attached to this text a progress report on the Ottawa Process of drafting and concluding by December 1997 a comprehensive treaty banning anti-personnel mines. Canada is strongly committed to working with the concerned global community to put in place, by December 1997, a new norm against these weapons. The work to eliminate AP mines will not end in 1997. We will need to universalize this norm. And the challenge of detecting and clearing the millions of AP mines already in the ground, and

assisting the many victims, will continue for decades. However, we will have taken an enormous step forward in meeting the AP mine challenge.

The support of 155 countries for the recent United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for an international agreement to ban the production, stockpiling, transfer and - most importantly - use of AP mines demonstrates that there is global recognition of the need to act.

Our consultations in every region of the world, particularly in those States most affected by mines, have confirmed to us that the will to act quickly also exists. On 29 November 1996 the Central American and Caribbean Foreign Ministers formally endorsed the Ottawa Process and indicated their support for the signature of a treaty in December 1997. Many other Governments have done likewise. The momentum towards a ban continues to grow.

We are also encouraged by the fact that the process for developing a comprehensive treaty has already emerged: a process which is credible, transparent and open to all countries. As foreseen in the Agenda for Action produced during the Ottawa meeting, tne first such event, hosted by Austria, will take place in Vienna, 12-14 February 1997. This meeting will provide an opportunity for a full discussion of what a convention might look like. We hope that all delegations in this room will be represented at that meeting. We place special emphasis on ensuring the active participation of the widest possible range of countries, particularly the many mine-affected and developing States who live every day with the scourge of AP mines.

At the same time, we are also aware that some colleagues in the CD believe this issue is an appropriate one for the CD to address. We know there are differing views on whether and how this might be done. Canada is prepared to see this matter further explored in our discussions on the CD agenda - recognizing of course that there is already a process under way which has political momentum and a practical agenda.

Thus, if the CD is to deal with this problem, it should move quickly, with clarity of purpose and determination, to deal in an urgent manner with the political and humanitarian imperatives of the AP mine crisis. In Canada's view, it should deal with the AP mine issue in a comprehensive way - developing a mandate and quickly concluding negotiations to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of AP mines.

But, in any event, Canada believes that the impetus, direction and commitment of the many countries working toward the urgent conclusion of an AP mine treaty and any efforts undertaken in the CD must be complementary and mutually reinforcing.

There is tremendous public support for a ban on AP mines from around the world. We must draw on this energy and ensure that all our efforts contribute to leading us quickly to realize our common objective: an AP mine ban.

(Mr. Moher, Canada)

We are all aware that discussions and negotiations in the CD do not take place in a vacuum. As our 1997 CD session begins, we are also beginning to consider the next review of the NPT within the context of a strengthened and qualitatively different review process.

As we hope our work in 1997 and beyond will confirm, the 1995 decision to extend indefinitely the NPT and to adopt the "Principles and objectives" document qualitatively changed the international community's approach to this review process - a process which will necessarily be focused on the Treaty itself, but will be guided and, we hope, inspired by the "Principles and objectives" and our commitment to such a strengthened review process.

We have already agreed "to consider principles, objectives and ways in order to promote the full implementation of the Treaty" so that we can make recommendations to the Review Conference on "areas in which, and the means through which, further progress should be sought in the future". These two quotations should remind us that the review process we will launch in April is, in fact, qualitatively different from past reviews. It must deal with substance and process issues, not just the latter, from the very beginning. For our part, we will work to ensure that this change will be reflected, from the outset, in the work of the PrepCom.

There is also other important work happening in the arms control and disarmament context. In 1997, the Ad Hoc Group dealing with the strengthening of the BTWC has agreed to intensify its work. That decision was supported at the Fourth BTWC Review Conference in December 1996. We hope that the Ad Hoc Group will be able to move quickly and smoothly to rolling-text-based negotiations in order to draft a legally binding instrument that will strengthen our confidence in compliance with the Convention, including through the establishment of an appropriate and effective verification regime.

Further, we are pleased that the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force on 29 April of this year. We recall the Poland-Canada-Mexico-India-sponsored resolution at last fall's United Nations General Assembly First Committee session. That resolution called upon all States that have not yet done so to sign and/or ratify the Convention without delay. The resolution stressed the importance to the Convention that all possessors of chemical weapons, production facilities and development facilities, including the United States of America and Russian Federation as the only declared possessors of chemical weapons, should be among the original parties to the Convention. This position was endorsed and reinforced in the Final Document of the Fourth BTWC Review Conference. We reiterate this call here.

Let me close by congratulating you again and renewing our commitment to work with you, and all delegations, to make the CD's 1997 session a productive one.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Canada for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor?

(The President)

As I announced at the beginning of this meeting, I shall now suspend the plenary and immediately convene an informal meeting which will be open to members only in order to consider the requests received from non-members to participate in our work.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.30 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: The 751st plenary meeting is resumed.

I should like to take up for decision requests for participation in our work by States not members of the Conference. These requests, contained in document CD/WP.479, have been received from the following States: Brunei Darussalam, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Holy See, Iceland, Ireland, Kazakstan, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovenia, Sudan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Uruguay and Zambia. May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our business for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): I simply wished to raise a question. I see that the work of the Conference is beginning at the customary pace of the last couple of years, that is to say, very slowly, and I was wondering whether you were intending to organize any consultations so as to try, not so much to break the deadlock, as to move the work of the Conference forward. I have listened with great care and interest to the very important statements that have been made by delegations today. They were well-organized statements which show clearly that there are major differences among the members of the Conference on the agenda and the programme of work. I was wondering whether a progression from one Wednesday to the next, coming here to deliver fine statements, would be enough to begin the work of the Conference, or whether we shouldn't also give a thought to intensive consultations among the different delegations, under your distinguished auspices, in order to make progress.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Morocco, and as I stated in my opening statement I will carry on the consultations with a view to reaching as early as possible a consensus on the agenda for the 1997 session, together with, if possible, the concrete programmes on the individual agenda items.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 23 January 1997 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.752
23 January 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 23 January 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea)

GE.97-60117 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 752nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of France, Austria, Germany, Egypt, Bangladesh and Belgium.

I should like to welcome the new representative of Mongolia, Ambassador Bold, and as usual assure him of our cooperation and support.

Before giving the floor to those inscribed today, I should like to inform you that further requests have been received from Nepal and Armenia, States not members of the Conference, for participation in our work during 1997. With your agreement, I should like to take a decision on these requests without considering them first at an informal meeting. It would be my intention to take them up at the end of this plenary meeting.

I now give the floor to the representative of France, Ambassador Bourgois.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me as the year begins to extend to you my best wishes for success. The international community is counting on you. Let me assure you of the complete cooperation of my country and my delegation.

We are entering a year which will be a turning-point. The year which has just ended was a year of harvests. In the area of nuclear disarmament, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a treaty drawn up by this Conference, was opened for signature on 24 September 1996. A diplomatic exercise which began more than 40 years ago was thus brought to a conclusion. The exceptional procedure which made this result possible emphasized the extent to which the CTBT negotiations were no ordinary negotiations. They were imbued with such contradictory expectations and symbolism that the fate of President Ramaker's text appeared, if not more important than that of the Conference on Disarmament itself, at least closely linked with the credibility and even the survival of this institution. What would have happened to the Conference if it had failed? But success was achieved. With 139 signatories already, including 41 of the 44 States whose ratification is necessary, we are entitled to hope that the entry into force of the treaty is not an unrealistic dream.

The year now beginning must be a year for fresh sowing. The Conference on Disarmament is once again at a crossroads, as in 1993, after the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The first task that we must tackle is that of determining which road to take.

Mr. President, since you took up the Chair of our institution you have carried out consultations on what the content of a new agenda for the Conference on Disarmament might be. You have presented us with the initial outlines around which your ideas are organized. I can only encourage you to go further. It seems to me that the idea you have adopted of drawing up a list of subjects derived from our programme of action which could guide us

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

this year should be decided on rapidly in the light of the consultations which you have conducted. If you believe that an agreement can emerge and that some topics can be the subject of genuine negotiations, then you must move forward as soon as possible. However, the cautious conclusions of your predecessor, President Dembinski, to whom I would also like to pay tribute here, mean that we must also consider the possibility that agreement may not be reached or may take some time to materialize. Perhaps in that case you might consider speedily adopting the solution which over the past two years has enabled us to agree on the launching of concrete negotiations while respecting everyone's point of view: you could, while leaving pending agreement by the Conference on its agenda, note that no one is opposed to establishing one or several ad hoc committees with specific tasks, in other words, negotiating mandates.

My country is well aware of the positions of the various sides, and we respect them. But we do not a priori consider them irreconcilable, because this year the Conference is not starting from scratch. At a time when we have to choose which road to take, we must consider how we can make the best use of the lessons we have learned. What are these lessons? And what are the elements of consensus or quasi-consensus which should inspire our proceedings?

In the nuclear area, if we consider the United Nations General Assembly, the venue for the highest expression of international public opinion, I must note that in 1993, in resolution 48/75 L, the Assembly recommended by consensus the negotiation in the most appropriate forum of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. In March 1995, prompted by Ambassador Shannon, the delegations of the Conference on Disarmament laid down the mandate of the ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty on the basis of that resolution. In May 1995, that commitment to draw up a universal treaty was taken up formally in the section devoted to nuclear disarmament in the declaration of principles and objectives subscribed to by the 185 members of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

As you know, France has already taken a number of steps at the national level in this area. As of 1992 my country stopped producing weapons-grade plutonium at Marcoule, and stopped producing highly enriched uranium at Pierrelatte in 1996. Furthermore, in 1996 the President of the Republic announced that those two plants would be closed. France no longer produces fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. With the closures at the Plateau d'Albion and Mururoa and the reductions I have just referred to, France has made a unique effort towards nuclear disarmament, an effort which is consistent with deterrence based on strict sufficiency. My country has therefore unilaterally made irreversible commitments which must facilitate the success of the negotiations on the "cut-off" treaty. We expect as much from countries which have not yet made such commitments, or not on such a scale.

Only a treaty negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was, can confer on these commitments the universality which is an essential element to enable the international community to make progress towards nuclear disarmament. Such a treaty will

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

put an end to any possibility of a quantitative resumption of the nuclear arms race, just as the CTBT has put an end to the possibility of a qualitative resumption by making it impossible to develop new types of nuclear weapons which are even more sophisticated. It will impose new constraints on the nuclear-weapon States and any other States which may possess weapons-grade fissile material, and will thus effectively promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. Negotiations on the treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices will require a great deal of work because it will be necessary to address the delicate issue of the scope of the treaty, arrangements for verifying compliance with each party's obligations and also implementation. The verification provisions will, if they are properly negotiated, be able to introduce a note of trust which is fundamental in relations among States, both nuclear and non-nuclear, whether or not they have signed the NPT.

To summarize, my country remains convinced, as others are, including our friends from the Non-Aligned group, that because of their importance, nuclear issues must remain at the centre of our Conference's attention. If negotiations are able to begin on the "cut-off", France will do what it can to promote their rapid initiation and speedy conclusion. On the other hand, however, the idea of embarking on a road leading to the setting up of an ad hoc committee entrusted with all the issues of nuclear disarmament is triply problematical for us, or at least raises some questions in our minds. First of all, with regard to procedure, as we are only too aware, and as we hear every day, this is a time for saving money, and it would not be in the interest of the Conference to set up a mechanism, committee or any other arrangement which lacked a precise negotiating mandate and would be limited to disputatious discussions of generalities. The Conference on Disarmament is not a local pub or bar: it should not duplicate the discussions in the First Committee, it should not overlap with the Disarmament Commission. Although there are some who hold the opposite view, this is an automatic corrollary of its restricted membership.

Secondly, with regard to the substance, there is a very clear logic in making the "cut-off" the second set of multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation after the CTBT. If we consider other measures which might be proposed, I cannot see any which has any real meaning, in a gradual and step-by-step process, as long as the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons continues. My country can see in advance that the "cut-off" negotiations presuppose the imposition of new restrictions, new restrictions on non-nuclear-weapon States, whether or not they are parties to the NPT; new restrictions too on the States which have nuclear weapons. Today these are the only type of negotiations which can produce results in both disarmament and non-proliferation.

Lastly, from a practical point of view, we need results. Trying to evade the "cut-off" negotiations, which constitute an essential stage, would mean remaining at the stage of declamatory phrases or placing oneself in the final perspective of nuclear disarmament in the framework of general and complete disarmament: in either case, no concrete progress can be expected in the near future.

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

France is well aware of the difficulty of reaching an agreement and the fact that the negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material will be long and complex. We know that 185 countries have committed themselves here to implementing the Shannon mandate, agreed two years ago, and beginning the negotiations on a "cut-off", without any conditions and without any linkage to any other measures, but we are also aware that two or three partners are not ready to do so. We do not hope to force them to do so. However, we do hope to convince them to do so.

It also falls to this Conference to consider the second facet of its mission, the conventional facet. The preliminary work for holding a possible fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament have indicated that this is of equal priority in the view of the international community. In this field as well the Conference is not starting from scratch, and here again measures taken at the national level by some countries, including my own, have pointed the way to go. Since our last meetings last September, France has taken major steps to combat the scourge of anti-personnel mines. On 2 October 1996 the Council of Ministers decided that France would renounce the use of anti-personnel mines. This non-use rule allows of no geographical exceptions. It applies to all categories of anti-personnel mines. The only derogation provided for is extremely limited and concerns cases of absolute necessity relating to force security with the express authorization of the Government. France is thus the first permanent member of the Security Council to adopt such a firm position on the use of anti-personnel mines. Furthermore, the decisions to abandon the export and production of anti-personnel mines, which were reached in 1993 and 1995 respectively, will be covered by a bill which is soon to be submitted to Parliament. The programme of reduction of the anti-personnel mine stockpile by destruction undertaken in September 1996 will be continued. These decisions are consistent with the objectives set by the President of the Republic of mobilizing the international community to a greater degree to make progress towards a total and comprehensive ban on anti-personnel mines. You are also aware that on 1 October 1996 the European Union took joint action on anti-personnel mines and decided to combat and put an end to the indiscriminate use of these weapons and their proliferation throughout the world, thereby contributing to resolving the problems which they cause, have caused and will cause.

The international community as a whole has taken a stand on this subject, in a virtually consensual manner, in endorsing the objective of a total ban on anti-personnel mines by a very large majority with no negative votes in United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 L. As you know, France supported that text. But you are aware that we also want the resolution not to remain purely declamatory but to contain practical instructions - an explicit mandate given to the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate such an agreement. During the discussions in the First Committee, we noted that our ideas on this matter were increasingly understood and even shared. The decision taken by President Clinton on 17 January 1997 to a certain extent rewards our efforts and those of other countries which shared our ideas: we welcome that decision with particular satisfaction.

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

The establishment of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty for the total prohibition of anti-personnel mines is facing four difficulties today. First, some claim that anti-personnel mines are a humanitarian issue which does not really fall in the Conference's purview. Personally I would prefer to note that the question of mines certainly does have a humanitarian aspect: combating the indiscriminate use of mines. As such the modified Protocol II on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of mines and other devices was negotiated and adopted on 3 May 1996: from the humanitarian point of view we should work to make it universal. But the question of mines contains also, and above all, the dimension of disarmament. Because mines are weapons, and as such for many countries they constitute one of the important components of their defence, an element of local or regional balance. Hence a comprehensive ban on this type of weapon by its very nature comes under the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament, which, I would remind you, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously and by consensus has reaffirmed to be the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament.

Secondly, other States, sometimes the same ones as those I have just referred to, consider that the Conference on Disarmament would not be able to tackle two parallel sets of negotiations. Agreeing on mines would mean abandoning efforts to make progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I think this concern is excessive. Last year we were able to complete Protocol II and the CTBT in parallel. There is no reason why, if an agreement emerges in the nuclear field, we should not try to progress on both fronts. In any event France does not intend to hide behind mines in order to evade a discussion of the nuclear issue, which, with the "cut-off", remains a major priority.

Thirdly, other countries have expressed reservations concerning the very objective of a global ban on anti-personnel mines. In their view we should concentrate on the universality and the implementation of Protocol II. The task suggested to us by the United Nations General Assembly cannot be reduced to that objective. By coming out in favour of a total ban, we have opted for negotiations on an entirely new disarmament treaty. We must of course proceed with the requisite realism, and that involves adopting a phased approach. We must seek progressive, step-by-step agreement, with measures negotiated one after the other, leading gradually to a total ban. A ban on transfers should constitute the first stage, and that stage is certainly within our grasp.

Fourthly, others hesitate to take this path and are tempted by a different approach which would involve very rapid agreement among countries which have already renounced mines on the text of a total ban on these weapons, outside the Conference. Although we certainly recognize the political utility of all efforts aimed at facilitating the prohibition of anti-personnel mines, I must say that this approach would lose interest for us as soon as it left the political field and sought to pose as an alternative to the work of the Conference on Disarmament. This procedure would seem to us to be doomed to be ineffective, in a certain way: we do not need to hold discussions with the countries which have already renounced mines, we have to negotiate with those which produce, use and stockpile mines, if we want to reduce the number of deaths and avoid the appearance of new Cambodias.

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

Somalias, Angolas or Bosnias. After all, the advocates of that approach themselves admit that their proposal is not based on negotiations: at the very most they envisage consultations. We, on the other hand, prefer an effective treaty, even if it takes longer to achieve, rather than a rapid agreement which wouldn't really change the situation on the ground. Effectiveness presupposes in particular that provision should be made for verification, as pointed out by France and 45 States which signed the Ouagadougou declaration on 6 December 1996. Only the Conference on Disarmament has the necessary expertise to meet that challenge.

In the context which I have just outlined, my country believes that the best chance we have here today to begin work which can produce rapid and concrete results which are understandable and expected by the entire international community lies in establishing as soon as possible an ad hoc committee to negotiate a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel mines by means of a step-by-step approach. In that committee, day after day, because it will be a standing committee, because everyone will be there, or will have an opportunity to be there, we will be able to work towards bringing our views closer together, reducing the divergences between us, and finally producing, developing, a concrete product. Today France has the honour to propose to the Conference on Disarmament that such a committee be established.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France for her statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, Ambassador Freid.

Mr. FREID (Austria): At the outset, Mr. President, our congratulations and best wishes to you, and be assured that we will do our best to make your task easier.

I am taking the floor today above all in order to provide to this Conference some information on the expert meeting on anti-personnel landmines which my Government will be hosting in Vienna from 12 to 14 February. Most of you are doubtless already aware of this initiative, since official invitations to this meeting have been sent to Governments last week. Given the sensitivity of the subject under consideration, we thought it appropriate to explain in the context of the CD the exact terms of reference and to explain Austria's motives for inviting to this meeting.

In view of the widespread and unwarranted suffering caused by the use of anti-personnel landmines the Austrian Government was motivated to act, both at the national and the international levels, in order to come to terms, once and for all, with this scourge. Thus, the Austrian Parliament has recently passed a law which bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of such mines in our country, where existing stockpiles had already been destroyed in 1995. If I am correctly informed, Austria is thus the first country to have taken this far-reaching step of legally banning APMs for good, but we know that other countries are about to follow suit and can only encourage all of you to consider appropriate similar action.

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

We will circulate the text of the Austrian Federal Law as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

Yet my Government is also fully persuaded that lasting success cannot be achieved through spontaneous and isolated action, well intended as it may be. In view of the very limited progress achieved at the Review Conference on the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons last year, Austria sees the urgent need for a separate effective legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. At the Conference in Ottawa last October it became manifest that the size and regional diversity of the States sharing this view had reached the critical mass necessary for negotiations on such a convention and their early conclusion. Convinced of the feasibility of drafting such a text, Austria prepared a first tentative draft which met with considerable interest at the Ottawa Conference. Consequently, the Chairman of that meeting, the Canadian Foreign Minister, tasked Austria to present a draft at the Brussels Follow-up Meeting in June 1997.

Why is Austria hosting the Expert Meeting on the text of a convention to ban APLMs? Austria was encouraged to do so by the overwhelming support for United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S. One hundred and fifty-five States voted in favour of the explicit call in operative paragraph 1 to "pursue vigorously an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of [APMs] with a view to completing the negotiation as soon as possible".

We felt the urgency of the matter - and that means life or death or being maimed for 25,000 people a year - does not allow us to sit with crossed arms until every organizational and procedural detail for future negotiations is hammered out. We felt we could win precious time - and save human lives - if informal open discussions of what a convention might look like started already now. We thought a first tentative draft would be helpful to induce such discussions. While we do not start the real negotiations in Vienna, we will try to help to prepare them. We hope that all States represented in this room and many more will be present in Vienna and will actively contribute in the discussion. The responses received so far have been very encouraging. We have seen that there is interest for the meeting exceeding our own expectations. Already now, it is foreseeable that more countries will participate in Vienna than there are members in the CD. We seek in particular the input of mine-affected countries.

While it is well known that Austria is a staunch supporter of the Ottawa Process, let me state very clearly that the meeting in Vienna in no way prejudges the position of the participating countries on the form and the forum in which the negotiations are to be conducted. Austria does not even intend to discuss this issue in Vienna. Regardless of the forum in which the actual negotiations will be held, previous informal discussions on the text of a convention and a draft presented as a national paper but taking into account many comments received thereon will be useful.

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

Attached to my statement you will find an information sheet which resumes the key aspects of the Vienna meeting. It is foreseen to begin with an exchange of views on the key elements of a future convention. During this initial discussion, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines will be allowed to participate. After this, only the representatives of States and the United Nations as well as ICRC will proceed to an article-by-article review of the draft proposed by Austria. The informal and expert character of the meeting is underlined by the fact that no report will be adopted or any decision taken. On the basis of the comments received in the exchange of views, Austria will produce a revision of the draft, which will once again be distributed. Depending on the progress made at this first meeting, a second meeting will most probably be required in late May in order to elaborate further on the text which then would be presented by Austria as a national draft without prejudging the position of other countries at the June 1997 meeting in Belgium.

Let me reiterate the invitation by Austria to all States interested in the above-mentioned expert meeting. The Austrian Mission in Geneva is at delegations' disposal for any further information they might request. Austria is looking forward to the widest possible participation at this meeting and to your contributions to the text of an anti-personnel landmines convention.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Austria for his statement, and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Ambassador Hoffmann.

Mr. HOFFMANN (Germany): I would like to congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, upon your assumption of the responsible task of being this year's first President. We are fully aware that the first President of any CD session carries a special responsibility for bringing the Conference to an early start of meaningful and substantive work. This year, the burden of your office is especially heavy as, after the end of the CTBT negotiations, far-reaching decisions must be made which concern not only this year's session of the CD but will quite probably set the course for the CD in the years to come. I want to assure you of the full cooperation and support of the German delegation in bringing about a fruitful beginning of this CD session.

I also would like to pay tribute to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Secretary-General's Personal Representative, and to his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for the professional services they have been providing for the Conference on Disarmament.

Let me also welcome our new colleagues. I look forward to their invigorating support for our efforts.

I want, in particular, to thank you for the considerable effort you have made to arrive at an early agreement on the agenda for this session, as well as Mr. Petrovsky for his valuable contribution to this discussion. You have suggested an agenda which reflects very well the areas of priority which in the German view should be treated by the CD, and which addresses in a

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well-balanced way the two broad items of conventional and non-conventional disarmament. While nuclear disarmament remains one of the top priorities of this Conference, conventional disarmament and arms control must be addressed in greater depth in view of the large number of conventional armed conflicts and the tremendous suffering created by conventional weapons in many parts of the world. I welcome the fact that your agenda proposal contains those topics on which considerable discussions have taken place in the past, such as transparency in armaments and negative security assurances, and on which substantial work could be continued without undue delay. In my view, it should be possible on the basis of this proposed agenda to reach early agreement on a substantive work programme for the CD.

The United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly on 10 September 1996 to open the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty for signature. Thus, the negotiations which the Conference on Disarmament had pursued with determination and vigour over the last years reached a successful conclusion. The CTBT aims at ending the development of ever more sophisticated and qualitatively new nuclear weapons. Properly monitored and enforced, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will end the qualitative arms race and encourage much deeper cuts in nuclear arsenals than have been attempted thus far. It constitutes therefore not only an important contribution to horizontal and vertical non-proliferation but also, in the long run, towards nuclear disarmament.

By mid-January 1997 the number of CTBT States signatories reached 138. These States decided to bridge the period till entry into force of the Treaty by cooperating in the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO in order "to ensure the operationalization of the Treaty's verification regime at entry into force", as it says in paragraph 13 of the "Text on the establishment of the Preparatory Commission". Germany is fully committed to this process and appeals to all States signatories to contribute constructively to an early start of the provisional secretariat's work and to all States to promote the early entry into force of the CTBT through timely ratification.

The agenda you have proposed contains two items to which Germany attaches particular priority. These two items are a "cut-off" of fissile material for nuclear weapons and a ban on anti-personnel mines. In our view, the time is ripe for the CD to start immediately substantive negotiation processes on these two subjects.

When the Non-Proliferation Treaty was extended indefinitely, it was further qualitatively strengthened by the decisions on "Strengthening the review process for the Treaty" and on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament". The "Principles and objectives" make a significant contribution to some of the main areas of concern to the Conference on Disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament and security assurances. The first step of the programme of action laid down in the "Principles and objectives" under the heading of nuclear disarmament, the negotiation of a nuclear-test-ban treaty, has been taken.

(Mr. Hoffmann, Germany)

The second step should be a "cut-off" of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The objective of such a multilateral and effectively verifiable "cut-off" treaty would be to cap the amount of fissile material available for nuclear weapons. Such a treaty would be a necessary complement to the CTBT.

Nations have long sought such a "cut-off" treaty. In 1993, the forty-eighth United Nations General Assembly finally adopted unanimously resolution 48/75 L calling for "cut-off" negotiations. Two years later - after many months of consultations and based on the valuable work of Canadian Ambassador Shannon - we achieved consensus in the CD on a mandate to negotiate the treaty called for in the resolution. The basis for "cut-off" negotiations being firmly laid, there is no justification in further delaying the establishment of the respective ad hoc committee.

The German Government attaches high priority to the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a convention as a further important contribution towards non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

In April 1996, Germany unconditionally renounced the use of anti-personnel mines. Existing stocks will be destroyed by the end of this year. In July 1996 the German Foreign Minister announced a seven-point action programme on anti-personnel mines. Its prime objective is an international ban on such mines. We must once and for all eradicate this cruel and inhumane weapon. This is why Germany strongly welcomes similar steps taken by a growing number of States as well as the widespread and still increasing support for a total ban within the international community. The joint action by the European Union, the Ottawa Declaration and, last but not least, the overwhelming support for the fifty-first United Nations General Assembly's resolution to ban anti-personnel mines are proof of this development. In this context, I wholeheartedly welcome the statement by Ambassador Kreid of Austria.

I would like to congratulate the Canadian Government on their initiative to create a global movement of like-minded States committed to a total ban on anti-personnel mines. The momentum of this process, which is fully compatible with other initiatives to pursue a total ban, has to be maintained and further developed. Considering its global approach, the number of participating States should be as high as possible.

The German Government is committed to the early conclusion of a legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines. It should be total in scope and - as to adherence - as global as possible. Germany is decided to work towards this objective by all effective means and in any appropriate forum. Having said this, it is, however, our view that the universal role of the CD and the expertise and experience accumulated over many years in this negotiating institution should be fully made use of in concluding a total ban on anti-personnel mines. We should, therefore, immediately begin discussions in the CD on how best to achieve this goal as proposed by a significant number of States, including recently the United States of America. In our view it is crucial that any negotiating

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mandate agreed upon should stipulate a clear obligation to reach a total ban. It should equally outline which concrete steps should be taken to reach this objective and when.

A universal and legally binding ban on anti-personnel mines is not only a matter of humanitarian concern and urgency but also - aiming at the elimination of an entire category of weapons - an important international arms control issue. Given the CD's unique role in negotiating universal arms control agreements, its failure to reach agreement on an issue as important as anti-personnel mines would not only disappoint the international community. It could also raise questions about the effectiveness of the Conference itself and put its future role at serious risk from emerging alternative procedures.

The CD has in the past successfully negotiated treaties on the total elimination of certain categories of weapons of mass destruction. Germany strongly welcomes the fact that one of these treaties, the CWC, will shortly enter into force, and hopes that as many countries as possible will have ratified that Convention by that date, especially those countries with declared capacities in this area.

While the CWC contains an elaborate verification regime, the first disarmament agreement to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, the BTWC, lacks such provisions. Even though there has been progress in the Ad Hoc Group of member States on verification measures, there is a clear need to speed up the negotiations. In this context, we welcome the decision adopted by the Ad Hoc Group in September 1996 to allocate more time to the BTWC, as well as the relevant part of the Final Document of the Fourth Review Conference encouraging the Ad Hoc Group to review its method of work and to move to a negotiating format. Germany would like to see the negotiations on a verification protocol completed by mid-1998.

The expansion of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament remains a pending question. While we welcome the decision adopted by the CD in June last year to expand its membership by 23 States, we believe that the other States that have applied for membership can also make valuable contributions to our work. The German position has consistently been that all States wishing to participate in the CD as full members should have the right to do so. We support, therefore, the appointment of a Special Coordinator entrusted with the task of solving the issue of further CD expansion in a timely manner. In this context, I would like to recall the overwhelming support the United Nations resolution on CD enlargement received last year.

The growing number of States wishing to participate in the work of this Conference testifies to the great importance attached to our work by the international community. It is up to us to respond to these high expectations by reaching early agreement on a programme of work that reflects the aspirations and preoccupations of the countries and of the peoples of our planet. This is a difficult task, but we must and we can succeed in this task.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the German Ambassador for his statement, and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to express to you the congratulations of the Egyptian delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and our support for the consultations that you are conducting, in an active and competent manner, on the agenda of the Conference even though your country, the Republic of Korea, only joined the Conference on Disarmament a few months ago. I would also like to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Ludwik Dembinski of Poland, who guided the work of the Conference admirably throughout the final part of our 1996 session, and for the consultations he conducted during the inter-sessional period.

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues who have recently joined us at the Conference on Disarmament, namely Ambassador Mohamed Salah Dembri of Algeria, Ambassador John Campbell of Australia, Ambassador Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Ambassador André Mernier of Belgium and Ambassador Bold of Mongolia. I look forward to cooperating closely with all of them in the future.

I would also like to express appreciation for the efforts and the constructive proposals that have been made by Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference and the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in order to facilitate the initial work of the Conference on Disarmament. I would also like to thank Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail and the members of the secretariat for all the efforts they are making to assist the Conference in its work.

I have asked for the floor today to make a few observations about the work of the 1997 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to begin with an issue of the utmost importance to the non-nuclear-weapon States including Egypt, namely the question of nuclear disarmament. However, before doing so, I would like to recall that the year 1996 witnessed two very important events in the field of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. The first was the signing at Cairo of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty as a testimony to the developing countries' commitment to the cause of nuclear disarmament worldwide and also as a positive and encouraging step which should be followed soon by the negotiation of the establishment of another zone in the Middle East in conformity with the relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions and as a step towards the implementation of President Mubarak's proposal concerning the establishment of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. These steps should promote the achievement of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. In this respect, we welcome the agreement recently reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the redeployment of Israeli forces in Hebron as a new phase in the implementation of the Madrid peace process and the Oslo Agreement.

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

The second event was the adoption of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty by the General Assembly of the United Nations as a step, limited as it may be, towards nuclear disarmament. The importance of these two events cannot be overlooked and the message that they carry at the regional and international levels should motivate the international community to pursue the objective of nuclear disarmament and should give further impetus to the efforts aimed at achieving the universality of all international instruments relating to disarmament.

The issue of nuclear disarmment has been on the disarmament agenda for several decades. The international community has already dealt with biological and chemical weapons, which are now banned under the Biological Weapons Convention, which unfortunately lacks a verification regime, and the Chemical Weapons Convention, which will enter into force soon, unfortunately without the ratification of the countries which have the greatest stockpiles of these weapons. However, the most serious exception remains that of nuclear weapons, which are unquestionably the most devastating and destructive of all weapons. Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty called for negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament. That was in 1968, and this objective has not yet been achieved. The 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference agreed to extend that Treaty indefinitely, but without being able to proceed to a review of the implementation of article VI nor to agree on a binding time schedule for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We recongize that two nuclear-weapon States, namely the United States of America and the Russian Federation, have indeed made important bilateral achievements in this field, but we cannot deny that the nuclear-weapon States have yet to commit themselves to a clear time schedule for nuclear disarmament in order to fulfil their commitment to this so-called ultimate objective of nuclear disarmament referred to in article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The declarations, action plans, final documents, resolutions and recommendations calling for nuclear disarmament which have been adopted at the United Nations and other international forums, including the Non-Aligned Movement, could fill volumes. However, notwithstanding the will of the majority of members of the international community, nuclear disarmament is progressing at a very slow pace without a clear legally binding commitment to a specific time-frame for the achievement of complete nuclear diarmament. Such a situation might give the impression that those countries possessing nuclear weapons still believe that these weapons have a role to play in international relations. Experts in international law view this situation as a threat to international peace and security and a violation of fundamental human rights, particularly the right to life of present and future generations.

The immense destructive power of nuclear weapons was clearly behind the warning message highlighted in the report of the Canberra Commission of August 1996. Its central message was that the doctrine of nuclear deterrence was militarily redundant and dangerous. Furthermore, the report stated, and I quote:

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

(continued in English)

"A central reality is that nuclear weapons diminish the security of all States. Indeed, States which possess them become themselves targets of nuclear weapons. The opportunity now exists, perhaps without precedent or recurrence, to make a new and clear choice to enable the world to conduct its affairs without nuclear weapons." "A nuclear-weapon-free world can be secured and maintained through political commitment, and anchored in an enduring and binding legal framework."

(continued in Arabic)

Is it true that there are a number of forums which address nuclear issues, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole negotiating forum on disarmament questions, and the General Assembly of the United Nations. However, these issues are not being approached in a comprehensive and conclusive manner and, consequently, the security assurances for the non-nuclear-weapon States provided, jointly and separately, by the nuclear-weapon States, which were reflected in Security Council resolution 984 (1995) still fall short of our expectations since they are conditional, non-comprehensive and not legally binding and have not been negotiated multilaterally. Therefore, the decision on "Principles and objectives" adopted by the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference in May 1995 should be implemented by beginning serious negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a multilateral and legally binding instrument to provide non-nuclear-weapon States with comprehensive security assurances as soon as possible. Furthermore, in this connection I would like to refer to General Assembly resolution 51/43 which recommended that the Conference on Disarmament should actively continue intensive negotiations with a view to reaching early agreement and concluding effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The issue of a ban on the production of fissile materials is another case in point. We believe that a ban on the production of fissile materials, should not disregard the past production of those materials, which is commonly referred to as stockpiles, because that would be only a limited measure constituting a partial solution to non-proliferation and could not be considered as a further step towards nuclear disarmament. On this basis therefore, and in conformity with the terms of reference established by Ambassador Shannon the Special Coordinator on this matter, we could begin to negotiate a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials in a committee on nuclear disarmament which the Group of 21 has requested to be established in the CD, because we are considering this question as one of the measures forming part of the nuclear disarmament programme contained in the "Principles and objectives" that were adopted by the NPT Review Conference.

I do not wish to enumerate yet again the very numerous instances in which calls for nuclear disarmament have been made by the international community, I do, however, wish to make reference to General Assembly

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resolution 51/45 O, which called upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish, on a priority basis, an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to start negotiations early in 1997 on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament with a view to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework through a nuclear weapons convention.

In this context I would like to refer to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued on 8 July 1996 which unanimously recognized that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. Resolution 51/45 M adopted by the General Assembly called upon all States to fulfil that obligation immediately by commencing multilateral negotiations in 1997 leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention. This should be reflected within the context of the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating forum dealing with questions of disarmament. In addition, it is worth noting that the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted resolution 1996/14 on 23 August 1996 and contained in document CD/1433 which stipulates in its operative paragraphs the following:

(continued in English)

> "[The Sub-Commission] affirms that weapons of mass destruction and in particular nuclear weapons should have no role to play in international relations and thus should be eliminated;
>
> "Recommends that the relevant international forums, in particular the Conference on Disarmament should immediately start negotiations on nuclear disarmament to reduce nuclear weapons globally within a phased programme, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, thus contributing to the enhancement of international peace and security and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and above all the right to life."

(continued in Arabic)

The programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons which Egypt submitted to the Conference on Disarmament on 8 August 1996 on behalf of 28 delegations which are members of the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament (CD/1419) constitutes an additional contribution that will help to start negotiations in the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament that we requested to be established by the Conference on Disarmament. This programme of action recognizes that there is a requirement for active multilateral efforts to identify, negotiate and implement specific step-by-step measures for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons at both the regional and international levels. This programme contains concrete measures to be carried out by the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in three phases, the last of which takes us to the year 2020. The list of measures proposed is not

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exhaustive but it is understood that, in any programme for nuclear disarmament, all measures to be taken are inextricably bound to one another.

Since this statement concentrates on nuclear issues, to which the highest priority must be accorded, I do not wish to repeat extensively our position on the non-nuclear issues to be included on our provisional agenda. Let me only state that we continue to attach great importance to issues such as the prevention of an arms race in outer space because we are of the opinion that any military activities in this sphere should be categorically banned. In this connection, I would like to refer to resolution 51/44 introduced by Egypt and adopted by the General Assembly and which called upon all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and to refrain from any actions contrary to that objective. The resolution also requested the Conference on Disarmament to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space with a negotiating mandate at the beginning of its 1997 session with a view to conducting negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

We turn now to the issue of transparency in armaments, which must be dealt with comprehensively in such a way as to cover all kinds of armaments, be they conventional arms or weapons of mass destruction. In that case transparency would serve as an early warning mechanism in the event of the accumulation of all kinds of arms in any country, thus threatening international peace and security. Moreover, Egypt stressed the need for certain basic requirements to be fulfilled if the United Nations Register is to become a truly significant confidence-building measure and thereby contribute to enhancing security and stability. These requirements are: confidence-building measures have to be universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory; they must ensure equal rights and obligations for all States; they must address the legitimate security concerns of all States. In this respect we should retain on the agenda of the 1997 session two important items which were included in previous CD agendas, namely, new types of weapons of mass destruction, making reference here to radiological weapons according to United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/37, and the comprehensive programme of disarmament.

Mr. President, those are some comments on the proposal that you yourself have submitted for the provisional agenda of the Conference on Disarmament.

Turning now to the proposed prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, I would like to stress the fact that Egypt is among the countries that have suffered most from landmines. About 23 million landmines were planted in our soil by foreign Powers during the Second World War and regional conflicts. In addition to the citizens who are being being killed and maimed in Egypt every year as a result of those mines, the existing minefields, especially in the area of the Western Desert, continue to hamper the economic and human development efforts in this vast area of our country. Hence the elimination and clearance of those mines is a matter of high priority to Egypt and those foreign Powers which planted them should bear the full cost of their

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clearance. Egypt is aware of the magnitude and severity of the problems related to the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines, which is above all a humanitarian issue given the suffering they inflict on civilian populations, the heavy financial burden and the limited nature of the technology used in the detection and deactivation of these mines. However, we believe that measures aimed at the prohibition of landmines should be accompanied by serious and concrete steps geared, towards mine clearance from affected countries, in particular those countries which are unable to achieve this objective on their own. This could be done by meeting the technical and financial requirements for the achievement of that objective. In this connection, useful reference might be made to the final declaration of the CCW Review Conference held in Geneva in 1996 which contained a paragraph on the role of States involved in the deployment of mines in the process of their clearance, and I quote:

(continued in English)

> "Recognizing the important role that the international community, particularly States involved in the deployment of mines, can play in assisting in mine clearance in affected countries through the provision of necessary maps and information and appropriate technical and material assistance to remove or otherwise render ineffective existing minefields, mines and booby traps ...".

(continued in Arabic)

Moreover, we believe that, in our efforts to limit the proliferation of landmines, we should take into consideration the national security concerns of States and their legitimate right of self-defence enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly in the case of States with long borders passing through uninhabited areas which are also the areas in which illicit smuggling of drugs and weapons takes place with a view to undermining national stability and security and encouraging terrorist and criminal activities across the borders.

The question arises as to who should bear the cost of finding an alternative to the mines that have been planted to defend borders, especially in developing countries. This question must be addressed frankly and fairly by the proponents of the proposal banning anti-personnel landmines before we negotiate a treaty. At all events, this issue should not overshadow the question of nuclear disarmament to which we and the internatioal community attach top priority in conformity with the outcome of the special General Assembly session on disarmament, SSOD-I, and other relevant resolutions.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of promoting and strengthening the competence of the United Nation in the field of disarmament. This joint objective requires coordination between the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission with a view to supplementing international efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament. In the light of past experience, we call upon all States to

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cooperate in good faith in the implementation of all the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly concerning the work of the Conference on Disarmament in order to ensure respect for international law and democratic relations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Zahran for his statement and kind remarks addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh, Ambassador Chowdhury.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh): The Bangladesh delegation felicitates you, Sir, upon the assumption of the presidency. That you undertake these onerous responsibilities so soon after the Republic of Korea's joining the CD reflects your own and your country's commitments to our goals. This warrants praise. Bangladesh, too, is new in the CD. We are not, however, new in our dedication to its purposes. We hope our contribution would attest to it. I thank all who have welcomed me, and other newcomers, so warmly today. We appear to have come at an opportune moment just as the Conference is looking at the organization of its work for the year ahead.

In some ways the CD, as our French colleague has said, is at a crossroads. The CTBT is not without flaws, but it is a task largely accomplished. We now need to move forward. We must decide which way, and how. Both you, Sir, and Secretary-General Petrovsky have displayed remarkable initiative. You have endeavoured through your non-papers to point to the possible directions. You have sought to identify issues and priorities of delegations and groups. You have tried to balance several ideas. Doubtless, these will be discussed and debated. Nevertheless, for your attempts, we are in your debt. We would like you to know that no well-intentioned effort is ever wasted. We also welcome the steps several States have taken, as we have heard today, to buttress the mores of an arms-free or, at least, a less dangerous world.

The CD's abiding link with the Decalogue is beyond dispute. The Decalogue is not just its frame of reference, but also the definer of its content. Yet we know that change is one of nature's most fundamental laws. The world is in constant flux. One never steps into the same River Rhone twice. All things will evolve and perhaps alter, as will, indeed, the Decalogue. But perceptible changes must be preceded by intense consultations. These must be effected on the basis of agreement. New items for consideration should only follow such understanding, and there must be consistency with the Decalogue.

That being said, it is our view that the Conference needs a clear work programme. It should set the priorities for 1997 and the modalities for negotiating thereon. Ours is the sole negotiating forum on disarmament. The luxury of deliberations and items, however intricately politically balanced, is sadly not for us to indulge in. Our work programmes must entail the establishment of ad hoc groups with negotiating mandates. One cannot take up all issues at once. Only one or two can be identified for such focus. Others can be left for plenary deliberations in preparation for future negotiations. We believe that the idea that a single ad hoc committee can take up more than one issue within the spectrum of nuclear disarmament merits examination.

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

Nuclear disarmament is an unambiguous priority for the Group of 21. It has repeatedly called for the establishment of an ad hoc group with a negotiating mandate for this purpose. The Ambassador of Egypt referred to the 28 CD members last year tabling a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Bangladesh was party to that event. General and complete disarmament is in our Constitution. It is in our values. It is in our ethos. Our commitment to this aspiration, if not goal, is unflinching. That was the reason behind our joining the formalization of the indefinite expansion of the NPT. That was what inspired our signing of the CTBT despite its shortcomings and the least developed countries' concerns regarding financial obligations. The extension of the NPT and the CTBT were events that now lead to the logical goal, that is, the commencement of negotiations for the elimination of all nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth.

I must add, however, that your list contains items Bangladesh has no hesitation to discuss. The cutting off of fissile material is one such item. But this could be within the broad context of nuclear disarmament as envisaged in the phased programme proposed by the 28 members. However, my delegation does not fight shy of other issues. Ours is a peaceful country with most peaceful intentions. We shall do all that is possible to protect ourselves, to preserve peace in our region, and to bring stability in the world. We know for certain that there is no delegation with wishes to the contrary. But the manner in which we go about our business must be agreed upon, and this should conform to established priorities.

Nuclear disarmament is not an idea that is new. The time to address it with utmost seriousness has surely come. We must do it, all of us, together. There is a saying in our part of the world: "There is not much point in a flock of sheep passing resolutions in favour of vegetarianism if the leopards remain of a different opinion." We are aware that your task is not an easy one. Nor is ours. Yet Gordian knots have been cut before. We are confident that our endeavours will lead to fruition. My delegation will cooperate in every possible way.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Bangladesh for his statement and kind words. Now I give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Mr. Peeters.

Mr. PEETERS (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, since my delegation is speaking at this session for the first time, allow me first of all to congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. I wish you every success in discharging your functions and, from the very start of our work, wish to assure you of the full and complete support of the Belgian delegation.

I am taking the floor briefly before the Conference today in order to pass on a few ideas concerning anti-personnel mines, since some delegations have already addressed this issue. At the outset of this session my delegation wishes to make its contribution in order to dispel any ambiguity about this important matter. The recent adoption of resolution 51/45 S at the last United Nations General Assembly testifies to the firm commitment of the

(Mr. Peeters, Belgium)

international community to act and showed that a broad consensus has now emerged in favour of a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel mines.

The major issue of concern to us all today is how can we bring about this ban at an early date. Since the outset Belgium has played an active part in the process initiated in Ottawa. This is why Belgium has put itself forward as a candidate to organize the follow-up conference in Brussels in June 1997. But as I have just said, certain countries have recently expressed the wish that the preparation of this treaty should be entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament in order to involve a maximum number of States.

Belgium wishes to emphasize that in its view the two methods of work are perfectly compatible, as long as they are mutually supportive and complementary, or, in other words, as long as each approach is a constructive approach. Both forums have their own advantages. It is true that the Conference on Disarmament has its merits and it has a universal calling. Belgium fully recognizes that the Conference on Disarmament may be brought in in the future, to devise a verification system, for instance. However, we must at all costs avoid a situation in which the work through one process, whatever it may be, slows down or hampers efforts that are being pursued elsewhere. This would make the final goal more remote. And even if each process has its own way of dealing with the issue, our objective remains the same: a comprehensive and universal ban on anti-personnel mines. Hence the importance for my country of the process started in Ottawa, whose objective remains unchanged: secure at an early date a treaty banning anti-personnel mines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and kind words. I think that this concludes my list of speakers for today. Unless there are any delegations wishing to take the floor, I suggest that we move on to the next item.

As I informed you at the beginning of this meeting, I shall now take up for decision the requests for participation as observers in our work during 1997 received from Nepal and Armenia. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.480, which is before you. May I take it that the Conference agrees to these requests?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: As you are aware, intensive consultations are still under way with a view to developing a consensus on the agenda and organization of work of the Conference for its current session. I have put forward a proposal on the annual agenda which I believe could form a basis for our consideration in this regard. The statements made in the plenary on Tuesday 21 January and today also provided us with valuable guidance which will hopefully contribute to the consensus-building process on the agenda and programme of work. It is my intention to further intensify our consultations, on a different dimension, in order to bring about agreement on the agenda, organization of the work and of the modalities of negotiations as soon as possible so that we may embark on our substantive work. For this purpose, I

(The President)

intend, with your concurrence, to hold a series of informal plenaries, the first of which will be held next Tuesday, 28 January at 10 a.m. in this room.

Ambassador Tarmidzi of Indonesia has the floor.

Mr. TARMIDZI (Indonesia): Since this is the first time that I take the floor in the plenary under your presidency, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to extend congratulations on your assumption. Of course, a more proper address will be done at an appropriate time. I am asking for the floor to convey the preference of the Group of 21, of which Indonesia is at present the Coordinator, that the informal plenary be held on Thursday, rather than on Tuesday, for the simple and practical reason that the weekly consultations amongst the Group are on Wednesday.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): Thank you very much for giving me the floor, and I also, on my part, congratulate you with your function as President of the Conference on Disarmament. Being President of this Conference in the month that it starts its work is not an easy task, as was also mentioned this morning, and let me just tell you that my delegation fully supports you in your efforts.

You mentioned in your remarks just now the programme of bilateral consultations you are engaged in, and we, I think, as I also made clear on behalf of the Western Group, encourage you in pursuing that process. We have urgent tasks before us. We are eager, and I think this goes for all of us, to take up concrete work as soon as possible. I find this one of the encouraging signs coming out of the consultations that are being held on a weekly basis under your guidance at the moment, and I think that is good. We are all united in the desire to take up concrete work as soon as possible.

So I know that I speak on behalf of my Group when I say that we welcome your initiative to start a series of informal plenaries in order to tackle the issues that are before us. I think that is a helpful additional instrument in our efforts to agree on the early commencement of concrete work. I also welcome - and I think this is in the spirit also of my Group, although we would have preferred that we could start today - it is, of course, your prerogative to make another proposal, as you did, for practical reasons, and as I understand it, to give time to delegations, if they wish, and groups to consult. Now, I fully understand the need for delegations to get instructions and also, of course, for groups, if they so wish, to meet. But I just wonder - and, of course, it's only a question - whether it would be possible to consider, given the urgency to start work as soon as possible - actually this part of the session will last something like two and a half months, and we would like to make full use of the time allotted to us - would it be possible if groups - and I think that for my own Group that would be, of course, to be proposed to them as well - would it be possible that groups would meet a little earlier so that, for instance, we could honour your request and have an informal plenary, the first one this coming Tuesday? It is just a suggestion and an appeal, as I said, given the urgency of the task. Of course, the whole mechanism of informal plenaries is also meant to give all delegations the opportunity to give their views on the issues that we have

(Mr. Ramaker, Netherlands)

before us and, precisely, it is a useful instrument in addition, as I said to you, bilateral consultations in addition to the weekly consultations. So it is just a suggestion, if you wish, that maybe we could see and try whether we could consider speeding up the process a little bit.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for your comments and proposals. I now give the floor to the representative of China.

Mr. WANG (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor. We would like to congratulate you warmly on taking up the presidency of the first session of the CD this year. I would also like to reserve an opportunity for my Ambassador to offer you his formal congratulations on your assumption of the presidency. At the same time I would like to stress that my delegation will cooperate fully with you to promote the work of the CD.

Regarding the matter of an informal plenary of the CD, first of all we would like to thank you for your proposal. We will seek instructions as quickly as possible. This would not have been a complicated matter. However, this year we have a new situation. In other words, this arrangement of an informal plenary proposed by you actually cannot follow the same procedure that the CD has followed in the past in its normal work. The CD had its formal organizational arrangement in its normal work in the past. Under those circumstances, the matter of informal arrangements was in fact only a procedural matter and it was not complicated. However, this year the situation is different. On the matter of an informal plenary, I am afraid the format, the topics and the timing of such a plenary should be considered in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Of course this is only the view of the Chinese delegation. Your proposal has its merits and defects and it also constitutes a precedent which will have a bearing on the future work of the CD. Therefore naturally we can understand that certain delegations or certain groups require time to think this over. Proceeding from this standpoint, the Chinese delegation thinks that the proposal by the Indonesian delegation on behalf of the Group of 21 that the informal plenary should be held on Thursday is a reasonable suggestion. The Chinese delegation fully agrees with this suggestion.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Mr. President, as my delegation, both in the Group of 21 as well as at the last plenary, was one of those which wanted to have informal consultations in order to try and foster progress, I cannot but support you and congratulate you on your proposal. I think that things are much simpler. Your initiative is a very good one and in my view we could have initial consultations, as you suggest, on Tuesday, to see how we are going to proceed. In any case my delegation has no instructions on a number of points, but that will not prevent me from listening to you, listening to other delegations and reporting back to my authorities on the positions expressed on a number of topics and on your paper. I know that we in the G.21 wish to consult on these matters, but I will only be able to embark on consultations with the members of the G.21 once my own delegation has instructions, and I have none as yet. I think that in order to move things forward, we could - and I am not at all contradicting

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

our Coordinator, Ambassador Tarmidzi, when I say that it is simply a question of getting started and giving a hearing to you and others without adopting specific positions - I don't see why we shouldn't do that.

Mr. LEDOGAR (United States of America): It was my understanding that rule 19, suggesting that there should be consensus before there is a particular format agreed upon, referred to meetings on substance. I am frankly rather surprised that on a procedural matter, which is what I understand you have in mind in suggesting informal plenaries, rule 19 would be invoked. What is going to happen if we have group meetings on Wednesday, and at those meetings some members tell their group coordinators that they don't have instructions yet? Then we come back on Thursday and we hear that, well, there's no consensus within a particular group to hold an informal plenary next Thursday, and so on. Instructions on substance are understandable, but to get together to talk about procedure, our agenda, and that that requires prior consensus within a group, I find rather extraordinary. But if it is the case, then I wonder if you could not, instead of convoking informal plenaries, accomplish the same procedural mission by calling for an open-ended bureau meeting.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much for your comments. Rule 19 reads: "The work of the Conference shall be conducted in plenary meetings, as well as under any additional arrangements agreed by the Conference, such as informal meetings with or without experts." And then rule 22: "The Conference may hold informal meetings, with or without experts, to consider as appropriate substantive matters, as well as questions concerning its organisation of work". It is my understanding - well, before going further, there is a request from the Ambassador of Indonesia.

Mr. TARMIDZI (Indonesia): Thank you for giving me the floor again and I apologise for that. Although you have explained earlier that the informal meeting should in no way reflect the views of groups, our Group thinks that even though that was the case, I think it would be helpful if, at the informal consultations, the national positions of each individual country, when they're reflected, have already been consulted within the Groups. This, I think, is the intention of the proposal coming from the Group of 21. I know that we are all at your discretion. And I think also that when you mention rule 19 and rule 22, we are not going only to discuss procedural matters, but also substantive matters, and this is what we are concerned about.

Mr. BERDENNIKOV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Mr. President, I too would like to congratulate you first of all on your appointment as President of the Conference and wish you every success including in the matter that we are now discussing, the organization of the work of the Conference.

Mr. President, as I understand it, there are no disagreements among the members of the Conference as to whether or not we should hold informal meetings. I haven't heard anybody object to this form of work. What is at issue here is simply when such meetings should be held, whether on Tuesday or Thursday. I do not consider that this is a fundamental issue. And if a group of delegations, supported by another very important delegation, prefers to hold such a meeting on Thursday, then why can't we, in a spirit of compromise

(Mr. Berdennikov, Russian Federation)

and of course without any prejudice to the urgency of our work and the importance of this work, go along with that and agree that, indeed, there will be an informal meeting of the Conference, but on Thursday. I don't think that such a decision would do any harm to the work of the Conference - on the contrary, we would be taking a step forward, even if only a small one.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of the Russian Federation. Well, I thank, once again, various Ambassadors for their comments and I have duly taken note of them. Of course, under the authority of the President, the President can convene at any time an informal consultation of the whole. However, in order to give more weight to and in order to conduct more organized, presumably more productive, discussions, I would suggest that the informal plenary would be better. But convening informal consultations in informal plenary does not mean that I cease to carry on my bilateral and multilateral consultations which I have been carrying out these weeks, let alone the weekly Presidential consultations. On this understanding, I suggest that there is general agreement that the informal plenaries will start on Thursday, 30 January 1997 at 10 a.m., immediately after the plenary of the Conference.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco): I have no problem with your suggestion and, of course, it is always nice to be able to consult with colleagues from the same group, but my proposal is rather of another nature. Is it a requirement to have the plenary meeting on Thursday? Why don't we move the plenary meeting to Tuesday and have the informal meeting on Thursday? I really think that if there are many speakers at the plenary, little time will be left to consider the issues of the agenda. Around 12 o'clock I don't think we can seriously start talking about the agenda, which is a very important business. So, although I appreciate what has been said and your ruling, I think this is not the way to conduct our business, because we all know that we suffered from speech fatigue before, and that we have to take that into account.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi. With your understanding I will come back to this particular point you have raised as to whether the CD can skip the plenary on Thursday.

Is there general agreement that informal plenaries will start on Thursday, immediately after the plenary when we will have the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Foreign Minister of Australia as visitors? Is it understood?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The next plenary meeting will be held on Thursday, 30 January at 10 a.m., to be immediately followed by an informal plenary. As you know, on this occasion, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia, the Honourable Alexander Downer, will address the Conference, and I would therefore kindly request all of you to be present at 10 a.m. sharp in view of the heavy schedules of these two distinguished visitors.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.